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NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Working with non-governmental organizations: operational activities for development of the United Nations system with non-governmental organizations and Governments at the grass-roots and national levels

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Working with non-governmental organizations: operational activities for development of the United Nations system with non-governmental organizations and Governments at the grass-roots and national levels" (JIU/REP/93/1).

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WORKING WITH NGOS: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS AT THE GRASSROOTS AND NATIONAL LEVELS

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Acronyms

ACC	**Administrative Committee on Coordination**
CCSQ(OPS)	**Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities), of ACC**
COPAC	**Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives**
DDS	**Domestic Development Service, of UNV**
EC	**European Communities**
ECA	**United Nations Economic Commission for Africa**
ECOSOC	**United Nations Economic and Social Council**
ESCAP	**United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**
FAO	**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**
FFHC/AD	**Freedom from Hunger Campaign/Action for Development, of FAO**
ICVA	**International Council of Voluntary Agencies**
IFAD	**International Fund for Agricultural Development**
ILO	**International Labour Organisation**
INTRAC	**International NGO Training and Research Centre**
IRED	**Innovations et réseaux pour le developpement (in English, Development Innovations and Networks)**
JCGP	**Joint Consultative Group on Policy**
JIU	**Joint Inspection Unit**
JUNIC	**Joint United Nations Information Committee**
MAS	**Management Advisory Service, of the United Nations**
NGLS	**United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service**
NGOs	**Non-Governmental Organizations**
OECD	**Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development**
PACT	**Private Agencies Collaborating Together**
PAHO	**Pan American Health Organization**
UNCED	**United Nations Conference on Environment and Development**
UNCTAD	**United Nations Conference on Trade and Development**
UNDP	**United Nations Development Programme**
UNESCO	**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**
UNFPA	**United Nations Population Fund**
UNHCR	**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Office of the**
UNICEF	**United Nations Children's Fund**
UNV	**United Nations Volunteers**
WFP	**World Food Programme**
WHO	**World Health Organization**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the past few years, governing bodies in the United Nations system have urged the system's development activities to give high priority to human resources, popular participation, institution-building, and the alleviation of poverty. To implement these policies, secretariats have begun actions to strengthen country programming, delegate authority, and decentralize activities to the field level. As these efforts progress, the organizations are discovering that thousands of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around the world are already very deeply engaged in the new priority activities at the field level.

The United Nations system and governments have generally not done much work with NGOs in the past, although agency experience varies from close and longtime co-operation to almost no contact. International organizations, governments, and NGOs have differing development traditions, perspectives, processes, and experience. These factors can and do create frictions, misunderstandings, and operational difficulties. The NGO sector is also so dynamic, diverse, and rapidly-changing that it defies easy analysis or "one best way" approaches. Nevertheless, the powerful recent international economic and political trends which underlie the new development policies indicate that more active and effective collaboration between these three groups can be a quite significant factor in advancing international economic and social development.

This report focuses on opportunities and problems involved in greater collaboration between international organizations, NGOs, and governments in operational activities for development at the field level. After a brief discussion of the nature of NGO work and recent trends, Chapter IV concentrates on collaborative actions and interrelationships among the three groups at the country level. Chapter V outlines support for these field activities from the regional, global, policy-making and inter-agency levels. Chapter VI then explores aspects of five important operational processes that can strengthen collaboration and heighten joint effectiveness.

The material in this report reflects extensive research, discussion and possible lines of action for operational improvement, but it only scratches the surface of this complex and still new area of "development co-operation" (in its fullest and best sense). The Inspectors therefore present the following conclusions and recommendations as an initial contribution. They hope that the report will become part of a vigorous and sustained process of discussion, exchange of experience, and collaborative action between international organizations, governments, and NGOs to help attain the urgent new development objectives which have been established.

Actions at the country level: The country level is the central focus for operational partnership with NGOs. It is there, and at the sectoral, district, and particularly local and grassroots levels within the country that field representatives of the United Nations system need to build face-to-face working relationships with NGOs and governments to further the central objectives of human development, capacity-building, and popular participation. Several basic steps seem needed to make this interaction as well-focused, efficient, and effective as possible.

> RECOMMENDATION 1: Executive heads of each organization with operational activities for development, and NGOs and governments, should consider the following basic steps (within the context of the situation, policies, and programmes prevailing in each country) to build on and share experience and enhance multilateral agency/NGO/government operational collaboration at the country and grassroots levels.
>
> (a) Participative programming process: integrative programming which seeks to actively involve relevant NGOs in the formulation, implementation, and assessment of development programmes in an ongoing and flexible process (paras. 42-57);
>
> (b) Delegation/decentralization: mechanisms to allow field representatives to work with NGOs and respond more flexibly and strongly to specific local needs, initiatives, and opportunities in a country (paras. 58-72):

(c) **Guidelines:** a distillation of experience, policies, ideas, procedures and requirements which allows field representatives to better understand how NGOs work and to facilitate collaboration with them (paras. 73-81);

(d) **Host governments with NGOs:** advice on approaches which field representatives can use to encourage and facilitate joint government/NGO efforts (paras. 82-95);

(e) **Southern with Northern NGOs:** advice on the differences, similarities and changing relationships of these two groups, as the basis for encouraging their collaboration (paras. 96-103).

Actions at other levels: The country level is central, but other levels can play a very important role in supporting field-level work with NGOs, through operational and technical backstopping, information exchanges, guidelines, and operational research and assessments.

> **RECOMMENDATION 2:** Executive heads of each organization with operational activities for development, and NGOs and governments, should consider actions at the following levels to build on and share experience and enhance multilateral agency/NGO/government operational collaboration.
>
> (a) **Regional:** establishing a focal point for operational collaboration at the regional level, which would also support collaboration in those countries where field representation for NGO work is lacking or very thin (paras. 105-115).
>
> (b) **Global:** establishing a central unit or focal point which provides overall policy, guidance, and publications for operational activities with NGOs, emphasis on a mutual learning and dialogue process, and close contact with the organizations' operational units that work with NGOs (paras. 116-129);
>
> (c) **Policy-making:** seeking ways to benefit from NGO grassroots experience and perspectives by establishing regular, substantive consultations with them on operational issues and programmes and involving them more actively in special regional and global conferences on development issues (paras. 130-148);
>
> (d) **Inter-agency:** support for, interactions with, and strengthening of the information and other activities of the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service, a small inter-agency unit which has very well-established working relationships with Northern, Southern, and international development NGOs (paras. 149-157).

Key operational processes: Collaborative processes with and among operational NGOs are still quite new and under-developed. They differ considerably from collaborative relations with governments, because of both positive NGO characteristics (very flexible, innovative, highly participative, grassroots focus) and negative ones (vast numbers, isolation from other groups, and often very modest managerial and programme capabilities and aims). In the light of these characteristics, the Inspectors think four further areas should receive priority attention.

> **RECOMMENDATION 3:** Executive heads of each organization with operational activities for development, and NGOs and governments, should consider actions in the following areas to build on and share experience, strengthen NGO capabilities, and support operational collaboration between multilateral agencies, NGOs and governments.
>
> (a) **Networking:** identify relevant NGO networks and umbrella organizations, and encourage and support their ability to strengthen NGO knowledge and capacities (paras. 159-174);
>
> (b) **Databases and information exchange:** establish and maintain databases or directories of NGO partners, the sharing of database information where possible, and a two-way "information culture" to keep collaborating NGOs aware of the organizations' plans and

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programmes while also gathering useful information and ideas from the huge range of NGO information sources worldwide (paras. 175-191);

(c) Capacity-building and training programmes: support capacity-building and training opportunities at the field level and the capacity-building, research, and training programmes already well underway in the NGO sector worldwide (paras. 192-209);

(d) Evaluation: seek ways to harmonize and simplify evaluation procedures while maintaining proper reporting and accountability, encourage participative evaluation approaches, and strengthen NGO understanding of and capacities for evaluation (paras. 226-238).

Administrative Committee on Coordination: The agencies have not yet taken a very fresh or creative look at the whole area of financial collaboration with local development NGOs, including the many initiatives already taken by bilateral assistance agencies and NGOs themselves. Knowledgeable officials believe that joint efforts to develop effective guidance for future work with NGOs are very much needed.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The ACC should take the lead in developing appropriate, harmonized and simplified guidance for funding, financial management, and auditing processes with local development NGOs, to help build NGO institutional capacities and strengthen collaborative development work (paras. 210-225).

United Nations Development Programme: UNDP can take a particular leadership role in several critical areas mentioned above, because of its worldwide network of field offices, its important role in the Resident Co-ordinator system, its new emphasis on strengthening national capacities and grassroots participation in development, and its broad programme initiatives in support of NGOs over the past decade.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The Administrator of UNDP should:

(a) ensure that a focal point person is active in every possible field office, to gather and disseminate information on development NGOs in-country, encourage new initiatives with NGOs, and apply UNDP programmes in support of NGO capacity-building, (paras. 60-63);

(b) update and re-issue the 1987 and 1988 UNDP general guidance on collaboration with NGOs, in light of the many new developments and policies which have emerged (paras. 79-81);

United Nations: The United Nations Secretariat has very wide-ranging and extensive areas of operational collaboration with NGOs, including several important new areas, but it has not yet inventoried, analyzed, or organized these activities. Furthermore, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil in 1992 showed that NGOs can play a very substantive role in global conferences on development issues. Yet existing procedures for their participation are quite limited and ad hoc. "Popular participation in development" policies, and inclusion of the dynamism, creativity, and experience of local development NGOs, should apply at the global level as well as at the local and country levels.

RECOMMENDATION 6: The Secretary-General should update and issue an extensive but uncompleted 1988 management review of NGO involvement in Secretariat operational programmes, and then formulate an overall policy and framework for the many United Nations programmes which work with NGOs (paras. 126-129).

RECOMMENDATION 7: The General Assembly might wish to request the Secretary-General, in consultation with other organizations of the system, to analyze and update existing procedures for special conferences in order to encourage greater participation of NGOs and other groups in special regional and global conferences on development issues, and thereby help ensure popular participation in policy formulation on these issues (paras. 138-148).

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) report focuses on the operational activities for development of the United Nations system in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governments at the grassroots and national levels. Its objective is to explore new ways to enhance these efforts, in order to respond to new United Nations system policies which emphasize human resource development, popular participation, and the eradication of poverty.

2. The development NGO "sector" is an enormously dynamic and diverse cluster of thousands of NGOs spread worldwide. These NGOs operate with tremendous variation in size, objectives, and circumstances. Their development styles often differ considerably from those of international and government development agencies. Some agencies have worked closely with NGOs in the field for years, others are now becoming very active, and others have scarcely started. And NGOs, agencies and governments have had, and continue to have, difficulties in working together, for reasons discussed throughout the following chapters.

3. However, recent international changes and new policies presently provide quite significant opportunities for NGOs, governments and development agencies to form new partnerships in the field. This joint effort could put people and their basic needs and unrealized capacities at the centre of the development process, and reach out much more directly to the hundreds of millions of rural and urban people who have been largely left behind by existing development programmes. Joint efforts with NGOs are no panacea, but they can contribute a great deal to help make the new development policies become reality.

4. Because of the great diversity and imprecision of development NGO activities, some caveats on the scope of this study should be noted. It includes references to humanitarian assistance work with NGOs, but primarily where humanitarian and development concerns overlap, as is increasingly the case. It discusses levels other than the field, but concentrates on the way in which these levels support practical and effective field action. And the report discusses the traditional area of NGO/international agency collaboration - "consultative status" relations for conference and information purposes - only briefly and as it relates to field-level development programmes.

5. Above all, this report is only an initial effort to launch a dialogue and begin to identify ways in which NGOs, agencies and governments can work more productively together in development programmes. Each partner must develop its own processes and opportunities for collaboration. Hopefully, the report can help stimulate the exchange of ideas and information, as well as pragmatic action in this increasingly important field.

6. In preparing this report, the Inspectors visited eight developing countries for discussions with agency, NGO, and host government officials. In addition, they reviewed several hundred reports and other documents and held discussions with United Nations system agencies, other international organizations, and international NGOs. They are most grateful to officials of these organizations and governments for their assistance and ideas.

II. NATURE OF NGO OPERATIONS

7. The range and diversity of development and humanitarian NGOs is immense, and the literature and documentation on their activities is expanding geometrically. Perhaps the best single source is a conference with participants from 42 countries which was held by the Overseas Development Institute (London) and World Development in 1987 1/. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also produced an extensive discussion of NGO operational activities in 1988 2/, and the North-South Institute took a critical look at the basic processes and impact of voluntary action in the same year 3/. A report on the first international meeting of NGOs and the United Nations system in August 1991 in Brazil, published in late 1992 and containing an extensive set of papers, provides a useful update on these issues 4/. This Chapter provides a brief sketch of the nature, key characteristics, and field activities of operational NGOs.

A. Definitions

8. There is no single, acceptable definition of NGOs. Their variety makes it impossible to capture their essence in a few words. However, some major dimensions and aspects can be identified.

9. An analysis by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) states that NGOs tend to be private and non-profit organizations, with relatively small and flexible structures. They are generally established for service, religious, charitable or welfare purposes, and are largely financed through voluntary contributions. ESCAP also notes, however, that different situations give rise to different types of NGOs with largely different roles, which defy definition since they are so diverse in their origins, structures, purposes and functions 5/.

10. The same ESCAP document observes that people can meet their social needs along a spectrum from very informal groupings of family and friends at one end to highly formalized, statutory government bureaucracies at the other. The field of NGO activity lies in between the two extremes. An NGO may be only a step away from natural community structures, or it may be a bureaucratic service-delivery agency much like the government organizations. It may also concentrate its work on community development strategies in the informal area, or advocacy strategies to make the statutory sector more responsive to perceived needs 6/.

11. The World Bank has identified another typology, in which NGOs can be placed in five categories along a continuum from public (common goal) ends to private (market-oriented) purposes at the other extreme. The five categories are: community associations (most closely tied to beneficiaries); policy advocacy groups (focused on issues); service-providers/intermediaries (the best known NGO type, playing various roles); contractors; and co-operatives (profit-making, but with equitable sharing of profits) 7/.

12. A document on NGOs prepared by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) makes an important observation concerning this World Bank public-private concept. It notes that economists have said that NGOs emerge to meet unmet needs, i.e. as a result of "market failure". However, a political scientist can also cite NGO activity as a response to unmet social needs, i.e. as an indication of "government failure". Yet public, NGO and private sector organizations all have some shared motivations, and are not required to be rivals. The three sectors can obtain more far-reaching and sustainable results through collaboration in, for example, the health sector, than they could if they are working in isolation 8/.

13. Several other important definitional matters should also be noted:

(a) The term "NGO" has acquired wide international acceptance, but alternative terms are also put forward: "non-governmental development organizations" or "organizations for development" (OPDs) in Latin America and the Carribean; "associations privées de solidarité internationale" in certain French-speaking areas; "voluntary development organizations" in sub-Saharan Africa; or "private voluntary organizations" (PVOs) in the United States;

(b) A significant distinction is made in the literature on development NGOs (and in the rest of this report) between "Northern NGOs" (based in developed countries) and "Southern NGOs" (based in developing countries);

(c) NGOs are also classified by their geographical scope: international NGOs (INGOs), regional NGOs, national NGOs, and community NGOs at the "grassroots" level;

(d) International NGOs may be differentiated from "indigenous NGOs", or "local NGOs", whose membership is entirely composed of people of that country;

(e) Membership organizations in which grassroots associations are themselves represented should be distinguished from intermediate organizations which provide services to grassroots associations but are not accountable to them.

14. In addition, important questions arise concerning funding, voluntarism, and the degree of participation found in NGOs. They appear throughout the following chapters. Who controls a particular NGO? What clientele does it serve? Who is it accountable to, and how? How much funding can an NGO accept from governmental sources and still properly call itself "non-governmental"? If an NGO develops bureaucratic and managerial procedures and skills, is it losing its "community based" essence? How aggressively can an NGO pursue profit and still maintain its NGO character (achieving public and social goals)? How well can or does the national affiliate of a Northern NGO, or a national NGO based in a capital city, or even an established community power structure, really incorporate the interests of the local population?

15. All these considerations illustrate the hard fact that United Nations system agencies and other organizations working with NGOs cannot merely apply someone else's definition of NGOs. Each organization must carefully consider and specify those types and categories of NGOs that can be important partners in pursuing its operational objectives, as a firm basis for its organizational policies, guidelines and processes for this work.

16. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for example, has recently been reviewing and updating its databases for work with NGOs. This process has yielded the following main categories of NGOs (sometimes overlapping) with which FAO collaborates (descriptions exist for each type, but they are omitted here for the sake of brevity): (a) rural people's organizations; (b) Southern development or "services" NGOs; (c) Northern development NGOs; (d) advocacy NGOs; (e) environmental NGOs; (f) NGO networks; (g) trade unions; (h) professional and academic associations; and (i) associations representing agriculture and nutrition-related industries.

B. Characteristics

17. Over the years, certain observations and expectations have emerged concerning the characteristics which differentiate NGOs from other development organizations. Given the tremendous variety of NGOs, such ideas must be approached with caution. They also risk becoming a caricature, or emphasizing competitive rather than collaborative attitudes. As a starting point, however, and with these caveats in mind, some very brief general ideas can be offered.

18. As a core statement, the 1988 OECD report observed succinctly that a primary difference between NGOs and bilateral and multilateral government organizations is that NGOs are at the other end of the scale in terms of size. A few development NGOs are very large, with staff and budgets rivalling or exceeding bilateral or United Nations system agencies' development programmes. But the basic reliance on voluntary funding and small-scale grassroots development projects keeps the vast majority of development NGOs quite small, and exerts pressure to do more with fewer resources. This means that NGOs can and must work with local groups and individuals, since the competence, commitment, and success or failure of these groups and individuals determines the NGOs' own success or failure 9/.

19. Following from these basic considerations, NGOs are felt to have certain significant operational advantages or merits.

(a) Flexibility: Because they are small and informal, NGOs can respond quickly and directly to development or humanitarian needs and opportunities.

(b) Outreach: NGOs can provide grassroots services and dynamism in poor communities and remote areas that other development organizations and host governments reach with difficulty or not at all.

(c) Responsiveness: NGOs are often very responsive to social, cultural and other aspects of development which technical development specialists may ignore.

(d) Experience: NGOs already have considerable hard-earned experience in supporting the strategies, programmes and projects of the rural and urban poor.

(e) Participation: NGOs are good at helping identify to community needs, and at mobilizing broad and active participation and support for local development activities.

(f) Innovation: NGOs are willing to employ new development approaches, techniques, and experiments which may eventually prove quite significant in a broader development context.

(g) Independence: Because of their reliance on voluntary financial and human resources, NGOs are relatively free of "tied aid" and rigid approaches.

(h) Economy: NGOs rely on low overheads, low salaries, volunteers, and appropriate technologies, and can therefore operate at low cost. Their programmes also cost less than official ones because they are committed to sustainable development approaches and to making more use of local resources.

20. On the other hand, and flowing from the same basic considerations, NGOs are felt to have some significant operational disadvantages or difficulties.

(a) Fragmentation: Because there are so many NGOs, operating on such a small scale and with disparate aims, collaboration with other development organizations is often difficult.

(b) Weak management: The informal and voluntary nature and scarce resources of NGOs can lead to a lack of control over operations and limited accountability for funds provided and results produced.

(c) Ad hoc focus: NGO activities are often individual efforts, implemented without a broader strategy, long-term focus, or relationship to the work of others.

(d) Politicization: Some NGOs have political or religious objectives, either overt or hidden, which can greatly hamper their work with host governments and other development organizations.

(e) Actual nature of operations: As noted previously, important questions of funding, voluntary, participative, and accountability practices need to be answered when considering a partnership with individual NGOs.

(f) Perils of success: As NGOs succeed and expand the scope and scale of their operations and funding support, they can drift away from the innovation, flexibility, independence, and voluntary and participative spirit which made them successful in the first place. They can also be thrown off-track by inappropriate support from governmental and multilateral agencies.

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C. Field Activities

21. NGOs have carried out humanitarian relief efforts in foreign countries sporadically for over 200 years. Following World War II, these programmes grew more systematic and continuous, and during the 1980s, they became very large-scale media, logistics, and field operations in which NGO and United Nations system representatives work courageously in very difficult circumstances to help relieve desperate human suffering. Both groups have made determined recent efforts to make their operations more efficient and responsive, and to work more effectively together 10/.

22. A major new problem is that many current refugee problems are not short-term emergencies: they require "durable solutions." The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has taken a leading role in efforts to shape refugee situations so that the refugees can operate in a more coherent, development-oriented way that builds their self-sufficiency 11/. United Nations system/NGO work in this area is further complicated by the fact that those NGOs with expertise in emergency programmes are often not those with the most experience in promoting sustainable development and local institution-building. A third problem is that some recent programmes are "humanitarian interventions" conducted in the midst of pervasive civil strife, which entwine traditional humanitarian aid with fundamental political, sovereignty, and peace-making issues. This complex situation has led UNHCR to further strengthen its co-operation with traditional NGO operational partners, and to establish links with advocacy, human rights, development, and environmental NGOs.

23. Because United Nations system programmes touch all aspects of global society, it is not surprising that other areas of significant co-operative field action with NGOs exist, a few well-established, the others quite new. Five examples are noted here.

(a) More than 60 NGOs join with 100 countries in providing field information to FAO for reports and action-oriented warnings about food shortages and the worldwide global food situation 12/.

(b) NGOs have been heavily involved, sometimes at great danger to themselves, in setting standards and promoting, protecting, teaching, and helping strengthen human rights infrastructures around the world 13/.

(c) NGOs are expected to play an important role in disaster mitigation efforts during the International Decade for Disaster Reduction which began in 1990, providing expertise, co-ordination of activities, stimulation of public awareness, and other actions 14/.

(d) The Global Programme on AIDS of the World Health Organization (WHO) provided grants to help teams of NGOs establish innovative, community-based activities in developing countries, and is now implementing a strategy which funds processes to increase the awareness, capacities, and collaborative efforts of NGOs working in this field 15/.

(e) Recent United Nations special civilian missions to countries to assist in special observer, election, referenda, and monitoring and supportive activities increasingly include NGO volunteers.

24. The whole idea of development assistance, the central topic of this report, is very recent, compared to the long history of humanitarian relief efforts. Missionaries carried out some overseas education and health efforts over the years, but it was only in the early 1960s that the emergence of many newly independent states and the concept of the Third World led to widespread field programmes to improve the long-term well-being of people in other countries. Both NGOs and United Nations system agencies shifted approaches to follow the ancient oriental proverb adopted by the FAO Freedom from Hunger Campaign: "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach him to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime."

25. NGOs moved fairly rapidly to establish development activities at the grassroots level, and from the routine delivery of development services to many micro-projects which seek to build local self-reliance and capacities to meet basic needs. Most importantly, and particularly during the 1980s,

thousands of local, indigenous NGOs emerged in the South and began to generate not only widespread participative development activities but their own co-operative networks and operational links with larger international development NGOs.

26. United Nations system development programmes have long concentrated primarily on technical assistance and "skills-transfer" projects with developing country governments. However, dissatisfaction with slow economic development progress grew during the 1970s and 1980s and policy emphasis has now begun shifting strongly towards poverty eradication, human development and popular participation at the local level. First bilateral aid agencies, and then the multilateral system agencies, discovered that NGOs were already there, with their "people to people" approaches, history of targeting the poor, innovative approaches, and reputation for direct, low-cost project management 16/.

27. Thus, the work of NGOs is increasingly being recognized as highly relevant to the problems of the rural and urban poor in developing countries. This contribution is even more important as "structural adjustment" programmes have reduced the role of governments in many countries, and placed added pressure on the private sector and NGOs to fill the void in services. In addition, NGO efforts have led to considerable changes in United Nations system development policies and programmes, through their firm emphasis on the negative impacts of structural adjustment programmes on the poor, the tensions between environment and development, and the general lack of attention to participative procedures and people's organizations in development.

III. RECENT TRENDS

28. Some powerful recent trends provide an extraordinary opportunity to better achieve international development objectives which have long been pursued: to put people at the centre of development, increase their capacities and skills, and let them take charge of their own, self-reliant development. Five factors, summarized below, combine to indicate that new partnerships with governments and NGOs could greatly enhance United Nations system ability to achieve these central goals.

29. New international organization policies During the past several years, both developed and developing countries have urged the United Nations system to make major changes in its development activities, and to provide more dynamic and innovative responses to specific needs in developing countries. They have cited the need for greater emphasis on human resources and aiding the poor, more support for participative and democratic processes, institution- and capacity-building efforts, and co-ordinated strategies and programmes to support national development leadership and self-reliance 17/. Member States have gradually incorporated these themes with earlier statements as new policy guidance to redirect United Nations system development programmes.

(a) As an example of long-standing priorities now being confirmed, the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCAARD) of 1979 provided an early and strong policy statement on poverty alleviation and participative processes. The WCARRD Programme of Action contained recommendations for national action in specific fields and to support rural development efforts 18/. A team of consultants reviewed the Programme of Action in 1990 19/, and an interagency task force and the FAO Conference agreed with the review team's conclusions that the main principles of WCARRD remain as valid in the 1990s as they had been when formulated in 1979.

(b) In its detailed and future-oriented resolution 44/211 of 1989, the United Nations General Assembly called for reform of the system's operational activities for development, including greater coherence and new programme approaches at the country level. It cited the need to strengthen national administrative capacities, human resources and self-reliance, and to maximize participative development 20/.

(c) The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has made extensive changes in its policies and programmes, as discussed throughout the following chapters. Its Governing Council has stressed that UNDP and its executing agencies should promote self-reliance within the framework of national plans and priorities, and has called for strategies to strengthen national capacities as a priority in six areas, the first of which is "poverty eradication and grassroots participation in development" 21/.

(d) The International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade (1991-2000) was launched by the General Assembly in 1990. It encourages countries to improve the human condition and the participation of all men and women in political life, and to promote development which reduces poverty, promotes the enhancement and use of human resources, and is environmentally sound and sustainable 22/.

(e) The "Arusha declaration" endorsed by the Conference of Ministers of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in 1990 called on all participants in African development to undertake far-reaching changes at all levels of African society to create the conditions for effective popular participation by people and their organizations, support endogenous development management and management capabilities, and foster the democratization of development and concensus-building processes 23/.

(f) The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) defined new programme orientations in February 1992 which gave a predominant place to the fight against poverty. It established a new, action-oriented Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation for this purpose, the first global intergovernmental body with an exclusive focus on the subject of poverty alleviation 24/.

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(g) In 1992 the World Bank issued an operational directive which stated that "sustainable poverty reduction is the overeaching objective of the World Bank", and "the benchmark by which our performance as a developmental institution will be assessed" 25/.

(h) In July 1992 the President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) presented recommendations calling for new system-wide policies and guidelines for the eradication of poverty. At the county level, the statement cited eradication of poverty as an essential element of sustainable and human-centred development. It urged, where host governments so choose, the development of a common, specific strategy to help alleviate poverty, which should promote links with other development organizations including NGOs. The statement also urged all relevant institutions to help foster popular participation at the national, regional, and local levels in development planning and in poverty reduction projects and programmes 26/.

30. Changed international climate The Cold War and superpower rivalry which dominated international affairs for 45 years have faded away, and the interdependence and sustainable development emphases highlighted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Brazil in June 1992 create great new opportunities for global co-operation: some say that the current period could be as pivotal as the industrial revolution was more than two hundred years ago. The international affairs and development lexicon contains many new or rediscovered phrases: "popular participation", "democratization", "institution building", "sustainability", "privatization", "human development", "alternative technologies", and "combating poverty". All these factors point towards much greater emphasis on precisely the kind of grassroots "people projects" in which NGOs perform most strongly.

31. Southern NGOs as important development partners: As the multilateral agencies shift their programmes and priorities to the grassroots level in developing countries, they find local NGOs already very active there. Their emergence in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East has been dynamic in recent years. Although no worldwide listing exists or is even possible, developments in a few countries give some vivid indications of the large numbers, diversity, and rapid growth of Southern NGOs and community organizations:

(a) Bangladesh: 1,200 independent development organizations formed since 1971;

(b) Brazil: 1,300 neighbourhood associations in Sao Paulo alone;

(c) India: an estimated 12,000 independent development organizations;

(d) Indonesia: 600 independent development groups working in environmental protection;

(e) Kenya: up to 25,000 women's groups with more than 600,000 members, an almost six-fold increase from 1980 to 1988;

(f) Mexico: a massive urban grassroots movement active in squatter settlements of major cities;

(g) Philippines: 3,000 to 5,000 Christian Base Communities as focal points for local action;

(h) Zimbabwe: small farmer groups with an estimated membership of 400,000, 80 per cent of whom are women 27/.

32. Southern NGOs have grown rapidly for a number of reasons. The difficult global economic conditions of the last decade and the vast number of people living in absolute poverty have forced greater organization for survival. The urgent need for new development approaches has led to more attention being given to initiatives at the local level. And the rise of more open and participative societies in countries undergoing major political and economic transformations greatly encourages NGO formation.

33. These general circumstances, and the supportive new development policies and approaches already mentioned above, have helped Southern NGOs to become more and more significant development partners, and to gradually assume a grassroots leadership role. Although they still need much hard work to establish their local constituencies and strong performance records, Southern NGOs are already attracting significant new support from Northern NGOs, as well as from aid donors and from their own governments 28/.

34. Increased leverage of Northern NGOs: Only a tiny fraction of NGOs in developed countries is concerned with international development. The OECD notes, for instance, that only about 100 of approximately 150,000 British voluntary organizations are mainly development-oriented. In addition, while there are about 4,000 development NGOs officially registered with OECD Member Countries, it is estimated that a mere 200 of them provide almost 75 per cent of the total grants to developing countries 29/.

35. Over the last decade, these large Northern NGOs have become not only central participants in humanitarian assistance programmes, but more and more active in development programmes as well, with basic emphasis on small-scale, participatory "people projects" in the poorest segments of developing country societies, rapid increases in co-financing arrangements with other development organizations, and increasing support for and joint activities with Southern NGOs.

36. The expanding Northern NGO roles are shown by their funding growth: Northern NGO resources for development have risen steadily from about $US 1 billion a year in 1970 to over $US 6 billion in 1988, with about two-thirds coming from private fund-raising and the rest from official government aid sources. This amount considerably exceeds that provided by the United Nations system (excluding the World Bank group), and represents about 10 per cent of total official aid resources to developing countries 30/.

37. Actions underway New approaches to work much more closely and effectively with NGOs in operational activities are not just a well-intentioned concept for action at some vague future date. The changing nature of NGO work and the many new performance demands being placed on NGOs (as noted above) have led to a considerable increase in self-assessments, workshops, and new co-operative efforts in the NGO community. There has been a further strengthening of Southern NGO performance and networking, and a search for new collaborative strategies and relationships between Southern and Northern NGOs. Multilateral and bilateral development organizations have also been expanding their operational relationships and programmes with NGOs at an accelerating pace. The rest of this report provides an initial exploration of these opportunities, actions, problems, and processes.

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IV. CO-OPERATIVE PROCESSES AND POLICIES AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL

38. **The country level is the central focus for operational partnership with NGOs.** This Chapter discusses some important structural and policy considerations involved in relationships between United Nations system agencies and NGOs, between host governments and NGOs, and between Southern and Northern NGOs. Five specific management issues of operational co-operation at the country level are discussed separately in Chapter VI, in part not to over-complicate this Chapter and in part because they also relate to work with NGOs at the other levels discussed in Chapter V.

39. As outlined in Chapter III, Member States are urging United Nations system organizations to make much greater use of NGO capabilities, as part of "people-centred" participative programmes, national execution of projects, and the alleviation of poverty at the grassroots level in developing countries. Two new JIU reports underscore this powerful new emphasis on country level operations. The first, an extensive review of decentralization efforts, notes that after years of discussion major initiatives are now emerging to move greater operational capacity and delegation of authority to the field 31/. A second report notes that new humanitarian, developmental and political realities make it imperative to make the system's field operations much more coherent, effective, and responsive to the situation and needs in host countries 32/.

40. In response to this increased emphasis on grassroots programmes, many United Nations system agencies are now shifting from limited ad hoc operational work with NGOs to broader scale activities, or are re-assessing and revising established activities in response to new policy directives and fresh opportunities. In this transitional situation, an analysis of all organizations' existing activities is not very useful. Instead, the following Chapters concentrate on new approaches and the recent experience of some agencies which may be useful to other agencies, or may stimulate them to new approaches of their own.

A. United Nations system with NGOs

41. United Nations system work with NGOs in a country can be divided into three broad areas of concentration other than the management issues to be discussed in Chapter VI: a participative programming process, decentralization/delegation of authority and responsibility, and operational guidelines. (The organizations also need to consider their role relative to host governments and NGOs, and with both Southern and Northern NGOs, as discussed in Sections B and C following).

1. Participative programming process

42. It is increasingly recognized that development activities in a country cannot be a patchwork of individual projects implemented by a whole range of external and national agencies. In its resolution 44/211 the General Assembly emphasized the need for a "programme approach." Since no clear definition was available, UNDP undertook consultations and reported on this topic during 1992 33/. It emphasized that the "programme" in question must be a carefully thought-out national programme and process, nationally managed or executed, which is supported by external agencies. This means not only that national authorities (either governmental or otherwise) are at the heart of the process, but also that it must be multisectoral in perspective, attentive to operational constraints, responsive and flexible in its implementation, and focused on impact rather than on inputs or even outputs.

43. A chapter in a 1992 JIU report on closer operational co-operation with the multilateral financial institutions summarized the strong new policy emphases urged by governing bodies, other development organizations, and recent in-depth assessments of development experience. These statements urge United Nations system agencies and other development organizations to:

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(a) work in a much more effective and collaborative way at the country level;

(b) become true, responsive "development" agencies rather than "aid-giving" agencies;

(c) analyze and assess local development needs much more carefully before intervention;

(d) develop country and sectoral strategies and policy dialogue rather than the old "projectitis";

(e) generally re-orient United Nations system country-level operations much more towards national execution and support to enhance host government leadership; and

(f) strengthen national capacities and institutions and maximize popular participation in development 34/.

44. This is a tall order. However, the United Nations system is beginning to respond to these needs. A 1992 United Nations report analyzed system policies and activities and new arrangements for the eradication of poverty, support to vulnerable groups, and amelioration of the negative effects of structural adjustment programmes. It examined in some detail co-ordination issues and inter-agency efforts. It also highlighted the need to further strengthen co-ordination and consultation processes at country level, and to develop in some form a coherent, system-wide framework for action in the area of poverty eradication 35/.

45. United Nations system approaches to new participative programming processes, and to inclusion of NGOs in them, are therefore still in a considerable state of flux. The Inspectors present in this section only some significant examples of different approaches being taken: an established agency process in a single country (the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Brazil); new strategic programming guidelines of another agency (the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)); national food security strategy development in several countries (FAO); an inter-agency approach in a small country (five agencies in Mauritius); and the collaborative efforts of various agencies at the subprogramme and project levels as well.

46. The section ends with the important point that NGOs also have their own programme approaches and objectives, and that co-operation in formulating programmes at the country level must not be a one-way process. It seems important that United Nations agencies share their experience in this key area with each other and with NGOs in order to advance the process.

47. UNICEF experiences in Brazil during the 1984-1990 period give a sense of a "state of the art" approach to a participative country-programming approach in which very active partnership with NGOs plays a prominent role 36/. The new country programme approach in Brazil calls for mobilizing national institutions and resources for children in a catalytic way, rather than the usual approach of supporting a few programmes in a few specific areas. This idea reflects a "Grand Alliance" concept which UNICEF adopted in 1987 to mobilize all possible allies to improve the fate of the world's children. Although this particular experience responds to the specific situation of Brazil, its major aspects seem quite relevant for other UNICEF, and other agencies', participative country programming efforts in the 1990s.

48. The new strategy was negotiated and agreed upon by UNICEF and the Government of Brazil for 1987-1990 and again for 1990-1995. It includes a specific mandate to go directly to the public at large and to engage in social mobilization. Its main characteristics include:

(a) defining the most productive lines of action to help women and children and developing a set of clear goals in each area;

(b) going beyond usual work with a number of government agencies and NGOs to mobilize and maximize the contribution of as many groups as possible, and build alliances around the common goals and targets;

(c) developing a strategy based on ongoing situation analysis to respond to new developments and opportunities, based on relevant data and indicators, specific goals, action proposals, and mobilization of opinion and support on critical issues;

(d) working with partners - government at all levels, NGOs, people's movements, media, the private sector, and the public at large - and identifying the most effective allies and opportunities for achieving specific goals.

49. The Brazil review includes case studies and papers on some key components of the new country programming strategy including:

(a) Situation Analysis - the role of, and experience with, continual situation analysis within the strategy, and co-operative work to set up a national system to track social indicators on women and children;

(b) Social Mobilization - the function and process of social mobilization to assist vulnerable groups at different, mutually reinforcing levels;

(c) Management Implications - human, management and financial resources needed to manage a "rapid response" strategy, involving intense computer use, investment in staff training and motivation, and appropriate use of short-term personnel to respond to new programme opportunities while "doing more with less".

50. UNFPA, another agency with long experience in operational collaboration with NGOs, has recently issued programme review and strategy development (PRSD) guidelines, not only to its staff and other agencies and donors but also to selected NGOs 37/. The PRSD objective is to establish a strategic framework for a national programme, and the new guidelines are based on lessons learned from more than 40 PRSD exercises carried out under a preliminary set of guidelines.

51. A chapter of the PRSD guidelines on the development of national and sectoral strategies includes a full section on NGOs. It emphasizes the pioneering and innovative role of NGOs in population programmes and their particular significance in increasing public awareness and promoting community involvement. To assure a more effective role for NGOs, the guidelines cite the essential need for their participation at an early stage of strategy development and programme planning. The section succinctly outlines key considerations under the following headings:

(a) preparatory phase;

  (i) definition and classification of NGOs;

  (ii) government policies towards NGOs;

  (iii) roles and contributions of NGOs;

  (iv) areas and mechanisms of NGO collaboration;

(b) PRSD mission phase;

  (i) programme review;

  (ii) elements of strategy formulation;

    a. definition of NGO roles;

    b. delineation of areas of collaboration;

    c. supportive inputs for promotion of NGOs.

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52. Since 1989 FAO has been assisting certain Member States to formulate comprehensive national food security strategies and action programmes. The process is highly participative, involving many groups including NGOs in a process of dialogue lasting as long as a year in which draft programmes are formulated, discussed, and finalized for submission to the concerned governments. FAO experience indicates that NGOs have an extremely important contribution to make to this process, and the proposed national programmes invariably recommend that NGOs be fully involved in the implementation process.

53. A very interesting and specific new approach to United Nations system joint programming work with NGOs in a country is provided by an August 1992 discussion paper from Mauritius. Although such efforts are clearly much easier to arrange in small countries, it does provide a useful example of the kind of framework and systematic approach that inter-agency efforts with NGOs can follow. Agencies in Mauritius decided to review their past experience and support to NGOs in order to identify possible future actions. The report discussed the following six steps (the first three already taken and the last three proposed) as the basis for a more co-ordinated inter-agency effort.

(a) Assessing experience in Mauritius with NGOs over the past five years, including the levels of financial support provided, the purposes, and the NGOs supported by five United Nations system agencies in seven different programme areas (children, family planning, disabled, environment, illiteracy, cultural, and miscellaneous).

(b) Documenting active NGOs on the island of Rodrigues, and identifying those working in social, educational or community development, then discussing with them the possibility of establishing an NGO forum and making plans to gather their views on the needs and topics which such a forum could discuss.

(c) Analyzing past United Nations system support provided to NGOs on Rodrigues to sustain their human resource capacities and help implement their development programmes in four specific areas.

(d) Advising on the request from a Rodrigues social service organization of NGOs for United Nations capacity-building support, including specifically the inclusion of a UNICEF grassroots training project and World Food Programme (WFP) "small schemes" projects.

(e) Designing a project document for funding by the United Nations system to provide more concerted support to NGOs, including the possible appointment of a highly qualified UNV community developer as the essential resource person for such a project.

(f) Helping UNDP and other agencies develop an NGO strategy for the fifth programming cycle in Mauritius, including

(i) co-ordination of United Nations system financial support, involving the identification, funding and monitoring of progress of projects chosen;

(ii) establishment of a training fund for capacity-building, composed equally of United Nations system and NGO representatives;

(iii) establishment of a training fund for capacity-building, utilizing more experienced local NGOs to train less experienced ones 38/.

54. The need for more collaborative approaches at sub-programme and project levels has also been highlighted, as cited in the PAHO document on NGOs 39/. "Steps should be taken within Member States ... to strengthen collaboration at the national level, and to intensify the alliances that are needed for effective co-operation at the village, local and district level" (WHO, 1985). "NGO projects should be their projects, even when UNICEF helps and supports them ... the desire of NGOs to maintain their own identity should be understood and respected" (UNICEF, 1987). "A recent circular ... has urged UNDP's traditional executing agencies to subcontract with NGOs for specialized services,

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including project design" (UNDP, 1988). "... it is in the planning and design stages that the NGO's distinct experience can best be brought into the decision-making process regarding projects" (World Bank, 1989).

55. Achieving popular participation in practice, however, is a very elusive and challenging task. It is vastly more complicated than just appointing a local consultative committee. Each agency must master the process for itself. However, a considerable amount of good analytical material has been or is being developed, from the programme level on down to face-to-face grassroots activities, as indicated by the following examples.

(a) Recognizing that supporting popular participation in large-scale development projects is a difficult process without many "how to" lessons available, the World Bank and NGOs have launched a multi-year research and learning process to determine how the Bank and borrower governments can effectively encourage popular participation in Bank-supported operations (see further discussion in Chapter V.B.).

(b) An evaluation of experience in five African countries in implementing the "Bamako Initiative" of 1987, which aims to mobilize resources to increase the quality of health services using country financing and participation, found much that looks promising but also concluded that there is a continuing need to define community participation more sharply, identify what can realistically be done, and determine what further actions the Initiative requires to ensure its viability 40/.

(c) FAO has produced many analyses of what works (and what does not) to enhance popular participation in rural development, reaching back not only more than a decade, but also up to the present 41/. The FFHC/AD programme has also moved from basic co-operation, project, and information efforts with NGOs in the 1960s through a broader emphasis on programmes, partnership, and sustainability in the 1970s and 1980s, to the present interrelated efforts with NGOs to enhance dialogue and networking, research and special studies, exchange of experience, training, and information and documentation. In addition, in 1991 the FAO Conference approved an extensive Plan of Action for People's Participation in Rural Development, which highlights the growing importance of NGOs and contains many detailed proposals for action to increase participation 42/.

(d) A resolution adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1987 found it essential that the technical co-operation activities of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) ensure the active participation of the populations concerned. In addition to its co-operation with employers' and workers' organizations, it called on the ILO to evolve a strategy aiming at maximum involvement of the poorest segments of the population in developing countries. A 1991 report financed by an inter-agency Panel on People's Participation, chaired by ILO, is particularly useful. It provides in considerable detail a clearer and more concrete interpretation of the methodology for promoting participation for use by development practitioners, and examines a wide range of experience of genuine attempts to promote people's participation in rural development projects 43/.

(e) The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) has been developing new strategies for mobilizing human resources, particularly national, in support of community-based initiatives, following on from a 1992 UNDP Governing Council decision which urged the Administrator to pursue this course of action 44/.

(f) The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) published a very extensive analysis of the causes and consequences of world rural poverty in 1992. The report cited promotion of people's participation as fundamental to the provision of services and resources for human development, people's participation as both a means and an end in development, and the need for a better partnership to bring the rural poor onto the "centre stage" of development 45/.

(g) An Interagency Committee on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific launched a two-year action programme in 1988 to promote participative rural development in the region. Review meetings held in 1988 and 1989 assessed the activities undertaken and lessons learned in four countries in which the programme had been applied 46/.

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(h) UNDP has circulated several papers for discussion organization-wide on the integration of participatory approaches into operational activities and analysis 47/. The papers were used inter alia at a UNDP Workshop on Grassroots Participation in Bangladesh in October 1992, which involved UNDP headquarters and field staff and external experts, incuding NGOs.

(i) NGOs themselves have given increased thought to enhancing popular participation within the larger context of donor-NGO partnerships, and have made their own assessments of specific programmes 48/.

(j) A recent issue of the journal of the NGO Management Network highlights personal efforts to build popular participation. It presents source materials, analysis, and discussion of the nature and complex responsibilities of "animators", those "front-line" individuals who catalyze the spirit of grassroots self-reliance in people's collective actions for social development 49/.

56. A final important point to be made about participative programming processes is that they are very much a two-way effort. Just as multilateral agencies must enhance their country programming and make it more participatory, so too must NGOs re-examine their goals and methods. Instead of acting only as financial brokers and/or operating only at the grassroots project level, they must now adopt a much more strategic approach to their work. That is, they must acknowledge the complexity of development programmes; attempt to define a distinct NGO role in those programmes; reach out more to governments, donors and other NGOs as partners; and develop and concentrate on the longer-term goals and impact of their development activities 50/.

57. The World Bank is already responding to this need. The Bank has worked to establish social/economic development funds or investment funds in various countries. A few of these funds have tried to further inter-institutional strategic planning as a key process to increase the participation of local and specialized NGOs in identifying, designing, appraising, and implementing programmes, and to help develop future "macro" policies affecting informal sector development. An Emergency Social Fund which began in Bolivia in 1986 raised some $US 180 million from donors to enhance local development through activities designed and implemented by municipalities, local groups, and NGOs. This Fund was the first of more than 20 similar programmes, which it is hoped will allow multilateral organizations, governments, and NGOs to work together much more systematically 51/.

2. Delegation/Decentralization

58. Participative programming is one central element of grassroots social development work with NGOs. Delegation/ decentralization is another. As the focus shifts towards "people programmes" and field partnerships, agencies must provide more responsive and supportive operations at the country level. The new policy emphases on delegation and decentralization in General Assembly resolution 44/211, on national execution, on local participation, and other factors cited in the two new JIU reports mentioned earlier, all underscore important new responsibilities and tasks for agency field representatives.

59. Country-level work with NGOs and community groups introduces some special new requirements. Agency representatives need to develop:

(a) a general understanding of participation possibilities, processes and mechanisms in their programmes;

(b) a closer understanding of the common values, practices, attitudes and cultures of the particular country in which they are stationed, as a basis for effective joint efforts;

(c) knowledge not only of key government officials responsible for their programmes, but also of appropriate NGOs or NGO networks, and the mechanisms, policies, and legal requirements which guide government-NGO collaboration;

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(d) ways to identify the skills and capacities of promising indigenous NGO partners, to help strengthen these capacities, and to keep track of actual performance in joint work;

(e) information sources and systems which can be shared, developed, and incorporated into joint programmes and strategies, as well as social mobilization and information-spreading opportunities in the society;

(f) possibilities (and problems) of external and joint funding, both international and local, to provide support for collaborative social development activities;

(g) ways to cope with the increasing geographic spread of grassroots activities to village, town and district levels throughout a country, rather than the capital city/government office orientation of most past technical co-operation projects;

(h) recognition that a considerable amount of time must be spent in developing and maintaining personal relationships and dialogue to effectively nurture and maintain on-going, longer-term, co-operative development programmes;

(i) a much more flexible and responsible operational process, which recognizes that participative social programmes may need extra time to establish goals and to adjust as they proceed, but may also require prompt and decisive agency support at critical moments (without a months-long pause awaiting clearance from a distant global headquarters).

60. These many new tasks indicate that United Nations system agencies must carefully re-consider the adequacy of staffing and skills required in their country offices, in order to fulfill the new development policy objectives and work more closely with NGOs. At present, of course, such work is still at a very early stage. Much depends on government and NGO attitudes and capacities within a particular country. In addition, agency country offices are already limited by small staffs and multiple existing tasks.

61. Nevertheless, inadequate staffing arrangements could be a critical barrier to more effective grassroots programmes. The Inspectors found, in the eight countries visited, that most agencies are now doing the best they can to identify joint opportunities with NGOs, but not yet in a particularly systematic fashion. In some countries, UNDP Resident Representatives and other agencies have established specific operational co-operation arrangements with the governments and NGOs. But in general, UNDP and other agencies still feel themselves caught uneasily somewhere between governments and NGOs, have only limited outreach to the NGO community, and have not yet found the time or new means of developing more effective partnership arrangements with NGOs.

62. In the longer run, there appear to be four main efforts required to facilitate the grassroots approach and country-level partnership with NGOs. First, there is a need for the country office of each agency to have someone who is knowledgeable about, and responsible for, relations with NGOs. The offices also need to have some encouragement and delegated authority to seek out and act on partnership opportunities with NGOs (subject, again, to the nature and scope of the activities of the agency in that particular country and the prevailing government and NGO attitudes).

63. It seems particularly important that at least the UNDP Resident Representative's/Resident Co-ordinator's office have someone responsible for focal point duties and initiatives. The Inspectors were pleased to note that in most of the countries visited, the UNDP office already had a staff member working actively and enthusiastically with NGOs. Unfortunately, many of these people were young officers on secondment, so that continuing work with NGOs is not yet assured.

64. A second way to strengthen collaborative work at the country level is to provide solid organizational support to the staff in-country (and to assist governments and NGOs), through policies, guidelines, procedures, information, new techniques, research findings, and direct operational and technical support. Promising activities are underway in various organizations. A sample of

country-level guidelines is cited in the next section, and the following two Chapters discuss a range of such supportive activities now existing or under development.

65. Third, a basic step toward sensitizing United Nations staff to NGO characteristics, concerns, and opportunities for collaborative work is training for staff at all levels.

66. The fourth effort, probably the most important in the longer run, is for the agencies to incorporate the above considerations into new, organization-wide programmes which can be applied in a decentralized way to the situations existing in individual countries. Such programmes could enhance agency partnerships with NGOs, help increase government-NGO collaboration, and expand intersectoral approaches within national development strategies. The programmes of WFP, UNDP, FAO, and UNV are noted below, with others referred to in the next two Chapters.

67. Some current field programmes emphasize delegation of authority, others emphasize decentralized programmes, and some a combination of the two. In December 1989, for instance, WFP took an initiative to give its country offices delegated authority to initiate small-scale development activities and emergency responses to reach poor people through NGOs. If host governments approve, WFP representatives can provide for food costs for as much as $US 200,000 for NGOs for development projects or $US 50,000 for emergency needs. The guidelines are a simple, quick procedure to join with NGOs in mutually beneficial arrangements to increase project effectiveness. They recognize that the country officials are best placed to judge when such involvement is appropriate and beneficial, and which organizations can best be involved 52/.

68. An initiative combining both delegation and decentralization is UNDP's Partners in Development Programme. In 1990, UNDP Resident Representatives in 60 countries were able to make grants for direct support of NGO activities, up to a total of $US 25,000 for each country. From programme inception in 1988 through 1990, over 400 awards were made, mainly for community-based, participative development activities. UNDP assessed the strengths and weaknesses of this programme in 1990, and proposed steps to strengthen the programme and develop multi-year, jointly-prepared operational strategies in each country involved 53/.

69. Several of the recommendations have been adopted in the second phase of the programme (1992-1996), which was approved in July 1992. During 1992-1993 the programme will be offered in 73 developing countries, with an expected allocation for this biennium of about $60,000 per country. To facilitate longer-term planning and sustainability of activities, awards to communities and NGOs in the second phase will be made on a multi-year basis, subject to the findings of an evaluation of the programme in early 1994 and the availability of resources 54/.

70. UNICEF's approach to country programming has long been delegated to the field level. The field offices in the 127 developing countries in which UNICEF is present have total responsibility for carrying out a situation analysis with the government every five years, which provides the basis for the five-year country programme that is then developed and submitted to UNICEF's Executive Board for approval. Although the extent to which NGOs are involved in the analysis and implementation of the country programmes funded by UNICEF varies greatly, UNICEF's programming process nevertheless facilitates such involvement. The Brazil experience discussed in the preceding section, though one of the best examples of nation-wide mobilization, is not unique. UNICEF expects that the flexibility and close contact with local NGOs resulting from this decentralization will continue to facilitate further improvement of NGO/government co-operation.

71. FAO has developed a Forests, Trees and People Programme involving some $US 2.5 million annually. It relies on trust funding to allow experimentation and explore new ideas, and a management process involving a high degree of dialogue and continual assessment and re-direction. The overall programme goal is to improve the livelihood of the rural poor in particular, through self-help management of tree and forest resources. The programme intends to provide new methods to support popular participation, institution-building, more participative field implementation, and greater information dissemination and exchange. It seeks to involve not only governments and aid agencies in this work, but particularly the 40,000 NGOs worldwide which deal with forestry and

forest-related environmental issues. Phase II of the programme began in 1991. It presently involves more than 3,000 organizations, institutions, and individuals in over 100 countries. It also emphasizes decentralization to give much more decision-making power and more systematic support to partner governments, NGOs, and rural groups 55/.

72. Similarly, UNV manages the Participative Development Programme, which aims to alleviate poverty by increasing participation in local self-help initiatives. Since the early 1980s, some 1,000 Domestic Development Service (DDS) volunteers have served in 35 countries in Africa, Asia and the South Pacific. Recruited from NGOs in the same region, they live and work at the community level, where they apply not only their grassroots skills - such as animal husbandry or primary health care - but especially their skills in promoting community organization and in sharing successful grassroots experiences. A recent assessment of DDS experience in Africa highlights, inter alia, efforts to transform the programme from the grassroots community upwards into a solid practical learning experience for participatory development 56/.

3. Guidelines

73. Operational policy statements, guidelines, and "lessons learned" are important to support field staff in their work with NGOs, as already noted. The following chapters mention many instances of such guidance. This section notes different approaches which six funding agencies have taken.

74. The World Bank has a relatively brief operational directive, which sets out a framework of guidance to staff working with NGOs, bearing in mind the need to consult with relevant member governments and consider their policies. The directive defines and classifies NGOs and outlines their strengths and weaknesses. It then suggests various ways of involving them in Bank-supported activities, gives guidelines for such involvement, and cites relevant considerations regarding procurement and disbursement, reporting, and responsibilities of country departments and other units 57/.

75. WFP has taken a gradual, experience-based approach. In late 1988 the Executive Director emphasized the importance of greater collaboration with NGOs to field staff, and WFP undertook a survey of field experience to gather experience and provide guidance. A 1989 memorandum informed country offices of the global patterns found: the frequency of co-operation with NGOs; types of NGOs worked with and types of activity; mechanisms for co-operation; assessments of the value, quality, and opportunities for collaboration; government views; and general conclusions 58/. WFP has subsequently delegated authority for small-scale activities with NGOs, drafted guidelines on specific co-operative steps and model project agreements, and issued guidelines for special activities with NGOs such as assisting AIDS victims and educational programmes for street and working children.

76. UNHCR has quite detailed guidelines, because of the large size and complexity of its programmes and its long-standing and considerable reliance on NGOs for implementation. Its revised programme and project guidance includes material on operational collaboration with NGOs in planning, programming, and implementation; monitoring, reporting, evaluation and audit; sectoral activities and operational support. It also provides formats and clauses for project sub-agreements. In addition, since UNHCR work with NGOs is now expanding well beyond the old sub-contracting role, it has worked with NGO umbrella organizations in Geneva to develop new policy guidelines for broader operational and advocacy co-operation with NGOs, which are now being widely distributed 59/.

77. UNFPA, in addition to its new programming guidelines already discussed, has also issued a document which most United Nations system agencies will eventually have to provide: guidelines for the "national execution" approach urged by the General Assembly and the UNDP Governing Council. In March 1992 UNFPA reported to the Governing Council on its own national execution initiatives, its past experience and progress towards fuller use of national capacities, major constraints encountered, and specific actions being taken now to encourage further progress. The document then provides UNFPA policy and operational guidelines for national execution 60/.

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78. IFAD established an Extended Co-operation Programme (ECP) with NGOs in 1987. It seeks to enhance IFAD work with NGOs by promoting pilot activities. These include testing new technologies for poor beneficiaries, new institutional approaches, and training programmes, all of which could lead to future IFAD investment or to support of ongoing projects. The President of IFAD can approve grants, not exceeding $US 75,000, and he has established operating procedures which govern initiation of the project/grant, project proposal specifications, supervision and completion of the project, and administrative requirements 61/.

79. As far back as 1975, UNDP issued guidance on strengthening collaboration with NGOs. Although the concepts of government execution and national execution go back to this period as well, in the past few years UNDP has been particularly busy preparing new guidance to respond to the major policy and operating changes in these modalities called for by its Governing Council and the General Assembly. Rapid growth in government execution during the 1980s led to considerable effort to institutionalize this process and improve programme oversight and quality 62/. This is clearly reflected in the issuance of extensively revised manual guidance on government execution in 1991 63/.

80. Meanwhile, the more inclusive modality of national execution has been given increasing priority. In 1991 the UNDP Administrator presented a broad framework for national execution 64/. The Governing Council requested him to consult with agencies and governments to develop guidelines to assist governments in national capacity-building strategies; lay out the roles of UNDP, agencies and recipient governments in all aspects of national execution; and use new technical support arrangements for this purpose 65/. In 1992 the Administrator made a progress report summarizing the various guidelines developed, and procedures underway to field-test and then revise them 66/.

81. The Inspectors believe that a further step is needed. The above guidance implicitly includes UNDP-supported work with local NGOs, but thus far it contains very little actual mention of NGOs and their operating needs and characteristics. The existing UNDP guidance on NGOs, an information circular of 1987 and general manual guidance issued in 1988 67/, is relevant. However, it has fallen behind the many new developments, policy initiatives, experience, and approaches discussed in this report. In accord with the 1992 call of the Governing Council for the Administrator to "promote vigorously" the building of national capacity for execution of programmes/projects 68/, the Inspectors recommend that UNDP, in consultation with other agencies and governments, develop updated and more specific guidance for operational field-level work with NGOs, in order that this important aspect of national execution can develop with maximum effectiveness.

B. Host governments with NGOs

82. NGO relationships with governments (as is true for almost every NGO aspect) are marked by tremendous diversity. Experience varies not only from country to country, but in different sectors within a country, and at local, district and national levels. NGOs may have been active in providing social services and in development programmes with governments for a long time, or may only now be emerging. Governments and NGOs may have very positive operational relationships, or very combative and mistrustful ones. Governments may have well-defined policies and procedures for work with NGOs, or they may scarcely pay attention to what they are doing.

83. United Nations system agencies presently find themselves somewhere in the midst of all this diversity. Their mandate is to work first and foremost in collaboration with member governments and in support of the government's development programmes. At the same time, they are now pressed to strongly support popular participation and institution building, to enhance "people programmes", and to work more with - and respect the independence of - NGOs. The agencies already recognize the difficulties and complexities that can arise in urging governments and NGOs to work more closely together, but also the much improved development benefits that such partnerships can produce.

84. These considerations make it clear that United Nations system agencies and their field staffs must increase their understanding of government-NGO relationships, and of the role that they can

and should play to further such collaboration. At present, experience in this area is still quite limited and only gradually emerging. It would seem quite helpful for all the agencies to review and share their experience to enhance their efforts to build greater three-way co-operation.

85. A recent article 69/ succinctly summarizes the key steps that a government, or a government ministry in a particular sector, can take to develop a clear, consistent operational framework for co-operation with NGOs, rather than the ad hoc, incremental patchwork of policies and linkages that often exists.

(a) **Inventory** - Information must first be assembled on the scale and breadth of NGO activities, not always an easy task.

(b) **Current situation** - What roles do NGOs fulfil? Where are they located? Whom do they serve? How are they funded? How well do they co-operate with others?

(c) **Comparative advantage** - The hardest task: in which areas of activity (such as emergency relief, or rural social service delivery) do NGOs, and specific NGOs, perform better than government units?

(d) **Policy alternatives** - Should the government increase its support for NGOs, or for certain NGOs? Establish regulatory controls? Shift government service implementation to NGOs, or vice versa? Involve NGOs more in government policy formulation, or vice versa?

(e) **Tools for implementation** - To increase collaboration, is the government using, and successfully using: grants or subventions? Supplies? Tax relief? Training? Registration and reporting procedures? Inspection and co-ordination mechanisms? Foreign exchange controls and aid controls? Membership on NGO or government boards or committees? Contracts?

86. Some other analyses help to fill out these basic considerations, and suggest certain recurring patterns of experience.

(a) A 1989 conference in Ecuador and case studies on joint efforts to support the development of micro-enterprises in Latin America concluded that a government's critical role is to integrate other institutions into a national strategy. A key corresponding need for NGOs is to strengthen their financial and managerial capacities as intermediaries to implement programmes 70/.

(b) A 1990 conference in Germany concluded that government/NGO frameworks should constitute a partnership, guarantee rights, and make the responsibilities of the partners explicit. Governments need to establish clear legal frameworks, effective registration and redress procedures, and a process to involve NGO representatives in policy formulation through regular consultations. NGOs, for their part, need to set up "umbrella" groups for meaningful involvement in the policy process, to articulate their views and role clearly, and to ensure accountability and proper conduct to their local populations. This requires that NGOs improve their financial stability, strengthen their management, and increase their mutual information-sharing. A 1991 conference provided further ideas on organizing the NGO sector, promoting partnerships, and identifying and overcoming "bottlenecks" which block such partnerships 71/.

(c) A 1990 case study analysed the first three years of a World Bank multi-year negotiating process to establish a Social Investment Fund in Guatemala. It concluded that despite good intentions, much effort, and considerable competence, each party could have done more. The Bank should be even more attentive to the sensitivities, incentives, and controls involved in the process. Governments should not overdo political control, and should have basic working relationships with NGOs in place before attempting something as ambitious as a fund. And once again - and perhaps most of all - NGOs must improve their organization, administration and relations with governments, in order to position low income populations to become effective, informed, and co-operative agents of their own development 72/.

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87. Asia has perhaps the most experience of any region with grassroots movements, NGO activities, and efforts to build government/NGO collaboration. The Philippines, for instance, is a country where many positive steps have already been taken. A national workshop was held in 1989 to encourage greater popular participation and strategic dialogue in key development sectors 73/. Government guidelines for NGO collaboration were established in 1989: they deal with accreditation, tax exemption, funding support, incentives, and co-ordination mechanisms 74/, and work has been done to draft a code of ethics for this collaboration. The government has issued a directory which identifies more than 2,000 NGOs and private groups as well as the NGO Desks in government agencies 75/, and a manual to guide national and international voluntary work in the Philippines 76/. In addition, a further government/NGO national workshop on people's participation in rural development was held in 1990 77/, and a first National NGO Congress was organized by ten national NGO networks and attended by some 700 delegates in December 1991 78/.

88. Collaborative efforts in Asia have been furthered by ESCAP. In December 1990 it held a seminar on government/NGO co-operation which included background studies on the promotion and improvement of collaboration, and papers analyzing government/NGO co-operation in 14 countries of the region 79/. Another ESCAP publication cites the Jakarta plan of action on human resources development, discusses the roles of NGOs and governments, and presents elements and mechanisms for a co-ordinated approach 80/.

89. An example of a broad-scale effort to facilitate collaboration is provided by the ILO. During the 1980s it sought to bring active rural women's organizations closer together with governments interested in reaching them, to work with both groups to identify employment and income schemes for women, and to strengthen networks and communications involving these organizations at the national and sub-regional levels. While the economic impact is still emerging, the project was found to have significantly increased rural women's organizational capacities, to have generated substantial action-oriented research, and to provide a useful model for subsequent ILO projects now underway 81/.

90. A World Bank working paper reviewed past Bank projects involving NGOs and sought ways to improve Bank-NGO collaboration. Observing that NGOs have generally been under-used as partner institutions, the paper concluded that the challenge for the Bank is to forge institutional links between governments and NGOs that extend and complement government capabilities. The paper noted the sensitivities and antagonisms involved but concluded that, although few examples of full collaboration exist, some recent Bank projects indicate changing government attitudes towards NGOs 82/.

91. Another Bank working paper, after reviewing both the strengths and weaknesses of NGOs in health delivery in sub-Saharan Africa, identifies constructive options to enhance the government/NGO relationship. They concern legal status, government monitoring, government subsidies, sectoral consortia, and decentralized structures. The paper questions whether the governments can afford to continue a laissez-faire policy towards NGOs, and whether NGOs themselves realize the greater role in policy-making and implementation which they can grow into within their decentralized national health systems. Donors, the paper states, need to help the institutions involved with creative solutions which allow NGO strengths to emerge, rather than making them mere conduits for funds 83/.

92. UNCTAD's 1992 report on the Least Developed Countries included a chapter on the role of NGOs in these countries. It discussed major issues concerning the policy environment for NGO development activities, their relationships with governments, and institutional and funding relationships between international and national NGOs. It called for improving mutual confidence among governments, donors, and NGOs by strengthening NGO (and government and donor) accountability, frameworks, and co-ordination activities. It also suggested supportive actions that governments of Least Developed Countries and donors can take to more effectively involve NGOs in national development efforts 84/.

93. FAO has assisted member governments in a number of countries to establish NGO liaison units. In Ethiopia, for example, the NGO unit in the Ministry of Agriculture not only serves as an entry

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point for outside NGOs interested in supporting rural development activities in the country but has also been a major actor in training both NGO and Ministry of Agriculture staff in participatory approaches to development. FAO also responds to requests from national NGOs for support in opening up channels of communication and consultation with governments on rural development policies. In January 1993, for example, it assisted the Federation of NGOs of Senegal (FONGS) in organizing a national forum during which peasant associations from across the country discussed with representatives of the government and major donors their analysis of and proposals regarding the impact of structural adjustment on peasant agriculture. A case study on this experience as an example of new directions in FAO/NGO collaboration is being prepared.

94. The UNFPA programming guidance already mentioned shows how an agency can incorporate considerations of government/NGO collaboration in its operational guidelines. First, the nature and extent of government policies towards NGOs, data on NGO roles and contributions, and areas and mechanisms of NGO collaboration should be identified. Second, programme review should delineate how the government and others in the country perceive and actually work with NGOs, the collaborative role of NGOs, and specific areas for collaboration with the government. Third, constraints on NGO activities should be identified, and a well co-ordinated and comprehensive strategy to support expansion of NGO activities should be developed, including in particular efforts with other donors 85/.

95. Finally, UNDP has been making very extensive efforts to expand contact with indigenous NGOs and encourage governments to collaborate more with them. Since 1989, a regional project in Africa has been providing consulting services to facilitate dialogue between NGOs, governments, and local UNDP offices; increase the management capacities of NGO consortia; and support the collection and exchange of information on NGO activities 86/. The project is presently providing services to governments and NGOs in 33 African countries, plus national consultations and a regional workshop. Workshops have also been held in Asia, the Arab States, and Latin America and the Caribbean. A major Arab States regional project is being prepared to strengthen NGOs and broaden their base of support.

C. Southern with Northern NGOs

96. Establishing operating relationships with NGOs, and helping NGOs and governments to work together, are key tasks for United Nations system agencies. It is also important, however, to be aware of the changing roles and relationships of Southern and Northern NGOs.

97. As noted in the introductory chapters, during the 1980s NGOs moved from a minor to a significant role as development assistance partners, and from provision of services (famine relief, child support, education) towards a broader development approach. Yet the disappointing overall progress of global development raised concerns among Northern NGOs about the limited impact of their small, scattered projects, and underscored the need to interact much more closely with the emerging NGOs of the South. As a result, a major effort has begun to shift from old donor-recipient relations to a new Southern-Northern NGO partnership which links grassroots activities with macro-policy issues. This involves, on both sides, a more strategic and programmatic orientation; building local participation, capacities and institutions; and improving Northern-Southern NGO communications and sharing of experience 87/.

98. Both groups have significant concerns. Southern NGOs recognize that Northern NGOs have made major contributions to meet humanitarian needs and facilitate people-centred development in the South. But they believe that more recognition should now be given to the emerging strength of local NGOs and their essential leadership and implementing role in their countries' self-reliant development. It is felt that Northern NGOs too often pursue their own objectives in developing countries, in ways that are counter-productive to local institutions and programmes, and that they dominate or ignore Southern NGOs rather than consulting actively with them. Southern NGOs would like to see more direct funding and institution-building instead of Northern NGOs acting as "pay-masters", greater respect for indigenous solutions to indigenous problems, and joint efforts to

cope with the common concerns of humanity rather than one-sided "solidarity" to "solve" the problems of the poor in developing countries 88/.

99. Northern NGOs are also reassessing and reorienting their work. Their larger scale of operations and complex development programming efforts in recent years have led to increased public visibility and scrutiny of their performance. They are hard-pressed to obtain scarce financial resources to continue and expand their overseas work. Determining the proper balance of their relationships with their home constituencies, donor governments, other aid agencies, and with Southern NGOs is not an easy task. And while they wish to encourage a shift of responsibility and implementation, they (and their contributors) believe that Southern NGOs must considerably increase their managerial, evaluation and reporting skills, and should also obtain more resource support from their own Southern constituencies 89/.

100. Various initiatives are underway to promote this new concept of Southern-Northern NGO partnership. For instance, a consortium of 85 Canadian NGOs, Partnership Africa-Canada, was established in 1986 with $Can 75 million of initial funding to promote African development by supporting the strengthening of African NGOs, including consideration of more flexible funding arrangements for institution-building. ACORD, another consortium of 20 European and Canadian NGOs, has conducted programmes in over a dozen African countries to strengthen local development institutions and initiatives, and has been considering shifting its programmes from a London base to a consortium of African institutions located across Africa 90/.

101. The International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), an association of voluntary organizations from 30 countries worldwide which promotes the development of the NGO sector and its greater effectiveness, has developed policy guidelines on relations between Southern and Northern NGOs. The guidelines, which have thus far been endorsed by 44 Northern and Southern groups, include the following points.

(a) Partnership - collaboration should be true partnership, based on mutual respect, actively shared participation, and joint accountability: in many cases, the real partnership is between the Northern constituency and the local Southern community, with the Northern and Southern NGOs serving as intermediaries and support agencies.

(b) Division of labour - the main role of Northern NGOs is to support Southern NGOs and local community groups through moral support, skills transfer, and financial assistance in implementing and delivering their own programmes.

(c) Field offices - in many cases Northern NGOs need field offices in the South, but such offices should be small, operate in harmony with local practices, and support rather than compete with local NGOs.

(d) Participative development - participative development is slow, unpredictable, and difficult to assess, so donor NGOs need to develop longer-term programme approaches and funding commitments which allow sufficient time and flexibility for local communities to develop, adjust and carry out their own programmes.

(e) Strategic management - both Northern and Southern NGOs must make planning, monitoring and evaluation intrinsic parts of their operations, as participatory and learning processes rather than as a mechanism to ensure donor control.

(f) Institutional development - creating and strengthening grassroots and national development institutions should be a major priority of development today, and appropriate management development and training, especially of and by local and sub-regional people, should be the key focus.

(g) Financing - Rather than traditional project grants, donors should try to provide multi-year funding and relationships with Southern NGOs; strongly support institution-building and

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management development efforts; make reporting requirements as simple as possible; and encourage development of the operational reserves, credit access and income-generating projects which can help local NGOs achieve the vital goal of financial autonomy 91/.

102. FAO may be the only United Nations system agency which has substantial experience in this area. The periodic FFHC/AD conferences and consultations since the mid-1960s have brought Southern and Northern development NGOs together to examine tendencies, problems and opportunities in development co-operation. An "Image of Africa" project co-sponsored by FAO in 1986-1988 also helped development NGOs in Europe and Africa to examine aspects of campaigns to deal with the food crisis in Africa, the impact of emergency assistance on the self-help efforts of the populations concerned, and to draw conclusions for North-South NGO co-operation.

103. In summary, both Northern and Southern NGOs are moving from their old roles of providing services towards broader programmes and the empowerment of local communities to enable them to achieve their own development in a self-reliant way. This new emphasis suggests many actions that not only Northern and Southern NGOs but also United Nations system agencies and other donors and participants can take to facilitate this essential, long-term, international development task. After a brief overview of initiatives at other levels to support grassroots work with NGOs in Chapter V, Chapter VI explores several important processes - networking, information-sharing, capacity-building and training programmes, administrative control requirements, and evaluation - in more detail.

V. CO-OPERATIVE PROCESSES AND POLICIES AT OTHER LEVELS

104. Effective development co-operation programmes require an integrated structure of mutually supportive processes. While the country level is the key for operational work with NGOs, the regional, global, policy-making, and inter-agency levels all have important roles to play. Since NGO interests and agendas are so heterogeneous, the quality of United Nations system collaboration and dialogue with NGOs can be considerably facilitated when each agency makes a careful effort to concentrate on those NGO networks which share common substantive interests and technical concerns.

A. Regional

105. The regional level might seem to be a "missing link" between the many activities with NGOs at the country and grassroots levels and the overall policy and guidance functions of headquarters units. It is true that work with NGOs at the regional level has not progressed very far, but some very promising efforts are underway inside and outside the United Nations system, as noted below.

106. Regional institutions should be significant in facilitating operational co-operation with NGOs, for several reasons:

(a) regional perspectives are an essential dimension of development programmes;

(b) an organizational programme at the regional level, especially for agencies with small and thinly stretched national offices, can provide operational capacity and a sharp focus on NGO matters and opportunities which might otherwise not exist;

(c) a regional level NGO programme can provide important information and facilitate NGO inputs to regional governing body deliberations;

(d) an active regional programme can provide and/or stimulate significant research and comparative analysis of situations and experience across the region, of benefit to all;

(e) operational liaison functions with NGOs in the regional offices of different agencies can form a network of significant value both to each agency's programmes and to overall regional development.

107. Among specialized agencies, all six WHO Regional Offices have assigned professional staff to work with NGOs. The Inspectors were particularly impressed with PAHO, where a full-time staff member has worked since May 1990 to encourage government and NGO partnerships, promote NGO networks, and build NGO capacity to participate in health planning and policy dialogues. Work has expanded so rapidly that a full-time intercountry consultant has also been appointed. Overall, PAHO is pursuing initiatives with NGOs in specific countries, expanding a data bank that presently contains some 500 names, establishing NGO focal points in each one of its offices throughout the Americas, producing an "NGO Bulletin" for information exchange among PAHO staff, and trying generally to catch up with the mushrooming growth and importance of NGOs in Latin America and the Caribbean over the past 20 years. One noteworthy effort is a 1990 document for PAHO staff which discusses the nature of NGOs, NGOs in action, how other agencies work with NGOs, and many examples of ways in which PAHO can work effectively with NGOs 92/.

108. FAO has operated regional programmes of support to NGOs through the FFHC/AD programme and its Regional Offices since the 1970s. In response to needs expressed by NGO partners, these programmes have concentrated on exchange programmes, training, project support, networks, facilitating NGO-Government relations, helping to identify Northern NGO partners, and the provision of information and documentation.

109. During the 1980s, UNICEF's six Regional Offices created a new high-level post of Senior External Relations Officer, for the specific purpose of strengthening collaboration at the regional

level with a variety of partners, such as inter-governmental organizations, NGOs and NGO networks, and the media. These posts have considerably increased co-operation with regional NGOs and NGO networks involved in advocacy on such issues as child rights and the improvement of women's status, and have strengthened the collaboration already developed by regional advisers in specific programme sectors such as health and education. Collaboration with NGOs at the regional level is particularly strong in the Regional Offices for Eastern and Southern Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, and South Asia.

110. Much of UNDP's collaboration with NGOs is taking place at the regional level. The extensive programme in 33 African countries to facilitate NGO activities with governments and with each other and UNDP has already been noted. In addition, the Africa 2000 Network supports NGO and grassroots activities in sustainable development through a small-grants programme. An Asia-Pacific 2000 initiative, in its pilot phase during 1992, will support local-level activities in urban environmental development, and another project in Latin America will step up support for NGO involvement in poverty alleviation activities.

111. ESCAP has taken the lead among United Nations regional commissions. A new Social Development Strategy for the ESCAP Region Toward the Year 2000 and Beyond was adopted in October 1991. It cites the challenge and merits of creating partnerships between NGOs and governments in planning and implementing social development efforts, while recognizing the two groups' complementary strengths as well as their distinct spheres of responsibility. In addition, a December 1991 ESCAP report analyzed the rapid growth in size and influence of the "NGO sector" in many countries in Asia and the Pacific, and proposed areas of future work for ESCAP to strengthen NGO-government co-operation on a region-wide basis 93/. ESCAP has also been working with NGOs over the past decade through symposia on such topics as co-operation for regional economic and social development and for rural poverty alleviation.

112. Although ECA has not yet been able to establish a supportive programme, the ECA Conference of Ministers did adopt an "African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation". The Charter was developed by 400 participants, including some 150 African NGOs and ECA as well as other agency representatives, at an international conference in Arusha, Tanzania, in 1990. The Charter, a result of quite vigorous and frank discussion, stresses human-centred development and the need for far-reaching changes at all levels of African society to facilitate effective popular participation by people and their organizations and associations. It calls for NGOs to be fully participatory, democratic and accountable, and urges the establishment of national fora to provide "honest and open dialogue between African governments, grassroots organizations and NGOs" to inform national policy-making 94/.

113. Other regional institutions have been more active than United Nations system regional bodies thus far in working with NGOs. For instance, the Asian Development Bank established its policy for co-operation with NGOs in Bank-financed projects in 1987, emphasizing particularly their relevance to the organization and participation of beneficiaries. Since then, the Bank has issued operational guidelines, published some substantial research on NGO activities in its member countries 95/, featured NGO operations and potentials in its 1989 annual report 96/, and has followed up to actively assess, discuss and enhance its co-operation with NGOs.

114. The European Communities (EC) have been even more heavily involved. Over the past 15 years, the EC has come to regard co-operation with NGOs as one of its most dynamic areas of development co-operation. EC officials stress that NGO and grassroots organizations' contact with the population makes them invaluable in promoting a different model of development, and in helping to promote human rights, democratization, and participation 97/. During 1990 the EC provided about 320 million ECU (roughly $US 400 million) for co-operation with NGOs, an increase of 14 per cent from 1989. As these figures show, the EC has very extensive operational linkages with NGOs for co-financing of development efforts; public awareness campaigns in Europe; food, emergency, and refugee actions; and special co-operative aid programmes 98/.

115. NGO regional networks are also becoming a significant factor. A recent annual report of the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) indicates the role which such bodies can play. Established in 1979, ANGOC's mission is to aid the poor of Asia, articulate their needs, and express Asian values and perspectives. Its four major programmes cover sustainable development, NGO institutional development, policy dialogue and education, and special projects. It works with both network and donor partners, provides an extensive array of meetings and publications, maintains an NGO database, and serves as a regional information clearing house 99/. FAO promoted the formation of this network and a number of other NGO networks dealing with issues relevant to rural development.

B. Global

116. Since the country and grassroots levels are the key points for collaborative operational activities with NGOs, the role of headquarters, like that of regional offices, is primarily a supportive one. Areas in which headquarters can be of most help, as discussed in other chapters of this report, are in formulating the organization's guidelines for operational collaboration, establishing databases and information exchange with NGOs, and the policy dialogue discussed in the next section.

117. A major global function is overall organizational policy-setting and leadership for work with NGOs. An organization's collaboration with NGOs, however, may occur in many different operational departments, in many different countries, and with many different kinds of NGOs. Thus, what is needed is not a rigid or centralized system, but a network which can respond flexibly and creatively to these diverse needs within an overall organizational framework and policy.

118. Further, given the newness of operational activities with NGOs, a policy paper or operational instructions are not sufficient. Instead, the organization needs to initiate an ongoing learning and dialogue process to enable it to maximize the results of this collaborative effort and achieve its programme objectives. Initiatives taken by agencies such as UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNHCR have been discussed elsewhere in this report. Recent developments in FAO, the World Bank, WHO, UNESCO, ILO, and WIPO are noted here, as well as the need for clarification and coherence of operational work with NGOs in the United Nations Secretariat.

119. In most United Nations system organizations, responsibility for NGO matters has usually been handled by someone in the external affairs unit. This makes sense, insofar as NGOs are "outside" organizations, and in the light of the traditional emphasis on NGOs in a narrow public information sense, as messengers who spread the word about an organization's programmes (see next section). But the new conditions and priorities of development work with NGOs require that the NGO focal point, wherever it is located, place a much stronger emphasis on close communication with operational departments, support for their work with NGOs, and a solid familiarity with what the organization is doing with NGOs at the field level around the world.

120. FAO first emphasized work with NGOs in its Freedom from Hunger Campaign during the 1960s, and in 1983 the Director-General again called for an organization-wide effort to expand and strengthen collaboration with NGOs. In 1991 the Director-General cited the increasing global and inter-sectoral nature of United Nations system work, and the resulting need for closer work with other organizations, including NGOs. He noted that responsibility for liaison and collaboration with NGOs had been spread among several units, but that a consolidated focal point was now needed to co-ordinate and encourage further co-operative activities with NGOs and to maintain contacts at the policy level. Accordingly, the FAO Conference approved, as one of the few areas for increased resources for 1992-1993, the establishment of a new, consolidated Office for External Relations with strengthened staffing to meet an expanding volume of representational, substantive and information-gathering activities 100/.

121. The World Bank has developed guidelines for operational collaboration with NGOs, supportive projects, regular consultations with NGOs, and extensive databases and information available through its NGO Resource Center. The main emphasis, however, is on a learning process. The Bank has reviewed its past work with NGOs 101/, followed by staff training seminars and a booklet on this

topic 102/, a three-year seminar programme on the role of NGOs in development, and staff exchanges with NGOs. Most broadly, and as urged by NGOs, the Bank launched an institution-wide, three-year learning exercise in 1991 on participative development. It seeks to:

(a) develop and document participatory, Bank-supported, operational activities (many of which involve NGOs);

(b) accelerate Bank learning about other participation initiatives inside and outside the Bank;

(c) consider any modifications needed in Bank practices to encourage wider participation 103/.

122. Although other United Nations system organizations do not have the World Bank's extensive resources, they can undertake the same organizational learning process, as recent efforts in WHO illustrate. Since primary health care at the community level is the central function and focus of countries' health systems, WHO and an NGO Primary Health Care Co-ordinating Group have a particular interest in better collaboration with each other and with governments. During 1991 a consultant made a review to identify key issues for further investigation. A priority need was identified to examine current strategies for collaboration, co-ordination, and policy issues at country level, and improved mechanisms for operations. Proposals were made for developing a framework for public health care implementation, concrete action plans, and operational research (characteristics, strategies, networking, and collaboration) at the country level. Follow-up work was carried out during 1992.

123. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is also adding to its long-standing consultative relationships with NGOs through changes in decentralization and country-profile policy. It is taking action to ensure better, stronger and more effective participation of NGOs at the regional and national levels by:

(a) promoting greater awareness by UNESCO National Commissions of their responsibilities to involve national NGOs in their work;

(b) organizing collective regional consultations with NGOs; and

(c) creating a special programme for support to NGOs, particularly in the Southern hemisphere.

124. The ILO is the only agency in the United Nations system which involves NGOs (i.e. workers' and employers' organizations) in every aspect of its work. Over the decades, it has also evolved strategies and policies to additionally involve a wide range of peoples' self-help groups and associations in its operational activities. Appropriate schemes and mechanisms for effective partnership with NGOs, at different levels and with different capacities, have been worked out. ILO has acquired a great deal of expertise through involvement and co-operation with community-based organizations, rural workers' organizations, voluntary self-help women's groups, management associations, artisans and craftsmen organizations, and others. In all cases ILO seeks to identify but also contribute towards enhancing the "comparative advantages" of the NGOs concerned.

125. The smaller, technical specialized agencies of the United Nations system have much more limited field programmes and representation than the larger agencies. However, they are also expanding their development work with NGOs where possible, as shown by the experience of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). WIPO works primarily with various specialized NGO associations concerned with industrial property matters and copyright and neighboring rights. More than 100 such international NGOs attend its meetings as observers, and an annual NGO consultative meeting as well. To expand the role of developing country NGOs in WIPO's work, the Director-General encouraged developing country governments to suggest some 70 additional relevant NGOs, and those interested in attending specific WIPO meetings are now invited. In addition, WIPO field development activities involve local NGOs in workshops, symposia and other activities.

126. These structural reforms and learning programmes are positive steps which all organizations should consider to strengthen their operational collaboration with NGOs. The Inspectors found, however, that the organization with the most wide-ranging areas of work with NGOs, the United Nations Secretariat, has not yet inventoried and organized its collaborative efforts. During 1992 the Secretary-General issued a detailed analysis of the needs of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit in New York, which handles the consultative, informational relationships of NGOs with United Nations intergovernmental bodies, programmes, and conferences 104/. But a comparable analysis of the much larger area of operational collaboration with NGOs does not exist.

127. During 1988, as requested by the General Assembly, the Secretary-General began a study of Secretariat relations with NGOs. The Management Advisory Service (MAS) made an extensive review of NGO relationships in programmes at various duty stations to explore improved arrangements for systematic collaboration with NGOs, and the feasibility of a database system to identify United Nations-affiliated NGOs with expertise relative to specific United Nations projects and programmes. However, for whatever reasons, this study was never completed.

128. Such a study seems to be even more needed now than it was in 1988. Various United Nations programmes have recognized the importance of operational relationships with NGOs, but too often their present relationships are ad hoc, uncertain, and deal primarily with routine information interchange rather than with substantive operational work. Meanwhile, there have been major new General Assembly policy directives (particularly resolution 44/211) emphasizing grassroots programmes and popular participation in development and many new initiatives for field-level work with NGOs throughout the United Nations system, as discussed in the other chapters of this report. In addition, important new areas for United Nations work with NGOs are emerging all the time, such as the human rights, disaster mitigation, and special missions examples discussed in Chapter II. And, since the Secretariat launched a significant reorganization in 1992, the need to clarify specific responsibilities and processes for operational efforts with NGOs is even more pressing.

129. The Inspectors recommend that the MAS update and complete its earlier study. Based on this information, the Secretary-General should then establish a structure and policies for operational collaboration of United Nations Secretariat units with NGOs. Because of the tremendous diversity and types of NGO involvement in the many United Nations programmes, the Inspectors believe that the Secretariat should develop overall policies and a learning and leadership framework for this collaboration, but leave sufficient flexibility to allow specific programmes to respond to collaborative needs in a responsive and creative way.

C. Policy-making

130. NGOs are not merely mechanisms for carrying out development, humanitarian, and other operational programmes in developing countries. They also have very important roles and responsibilities in gathering, articulating, expressing, and advancing the views, concerns, and needs of their members and constituents. This function is generally divided into two areas: educating and shaping public opinion in various ways about issues, and increasingly in discussing NGO views with governments and in other public-policy fora 105/.

131. The other chapters of this report discuss ways in which grassroots NGOs are increasingly developing these functions at the country level. Three areas of particular importance are participative development programming processes at the country or sectoral level, increasing work and dialogue between national or local governments and NGOs in operational activities, and much more extensive networking and information exchange efforts by the thousands of NGOs and NGO groups around the world.

132. It might seem that both Southern and Northern development NGOs, which concentrate their work at the grassroots level, are very remote from international development policy and from programme debates in multilateral organizations and at regional and global special conferences. Yet the decisions which these deliberations produce can have enormous impact on the way in which future development strategies and programmes are conceived and carried out. As various analyses have

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noted, grassroots NGOs can contribute a great deal of useful information for such development decision-making. They are especially knowledgeable regarding programmes for the poor, with a sharp focus on their needs, appropriate technologies, and flexible and innovative implementation strategies. This "micro" knowledge of NGOs should be a critical contribution to "macro" research and policy formulation at the regional and global levels to achieve truly effective grassroots strategies and programmes in the field 106/.

133. Much remains to be done to link these "micro" and "macro" perspectives and experience in development policy-making. For its part, United Nations system consultative processes are rather cumbersome and not very responsive to the current development policy situation. The United Nations has evolved its relationships with NGOs ever since 1945. Presently, some 1,500 international and national NGOs have formal "consultative status" relationships with ECOSOC (to attend meetings as observers, obtain documents and occasional briefings, and propose agenda items or submit documents in certain cases), or "association" with the Department of Public Information.

134. However, it can take NGOs as long as several years and considerable expense to obtain consultative status, and such status can be limited or withdrawn. Those who achieve it are usually international professional, religious and social issue NGOs that are active in New York and Geneva, not operational development NGOs. Further, the existing consultation process emphasizes NGO support to the United Nations, rather than two-way dialogue on substantive issues. NGOs are expected to contribute by "drawing attention to issues, suggesting ideas and programmes, disseminating information and mobilizing public opinion in support of the United Nations" 107/. The specialized agencies have generally similar procedures, although their range of NGOs is, of course, much more concentrated in specific fields than is true for the United Nations.

135. Development NGOs have policy dialogue problems of their own. Their deep involvement in operational programmes in their own areas has made them reluctant to get involved in, or provide funding and staff for, advocacy efforts. In addition, they have often lacked knowledge of the important issues, of negotiating and lobbying processes and tactics, and of national and international political agendas. They have not been used to working together. Their positions have been fragmented, and Northern and Southern NGOs have not understood each other well. All these problems have been even greater for Southern NGOs, which are far less well equipped than Northern NGOs to carry on effective advocacy programmes 108/.

136. This situation has been changing in recent years, as development NGOs move from service delivery to capacity-building, and then to empowerment and advocacy on national and international development issues. At the global level, for instance, ICVA developed and endorsed a policy statement and action plan in 1988 for public education, public policy and improved field collaboration across the fields of development, environment and population 109/. An example of efforts at the regional level is a 1991 consultation organized by MWENGO, a regional NGO support organization for East and South Africa. Over 30 NGO representatives from 12 countries discussed an agenda which included grassroots perspectives on Africa's crisis, governance and popular participation, relations with research institutes in Africa, the State in African development, and the emerging role of NGOs in policy advocacy 110/.

137. Among international organizations, the need for more effective two-way dialogue is evolving in two major areas, regular consultations in individual organizations and regional and global special conferences. Several agencies have been making efforts at more substantive discussions with NGOs during the past few years.

(a) FAO has held regular consultations with NGOs since the 1960s in the context of the FFHC/AD programme, and has also increasingly invited NGOs to participate in meetings in a wide variety of relevant technical areas. It also holds informal meetings for international NGOs attending the biennial FAO Conferences. The 1991 meeting focused on discussion of the international conference on nutrition, people's participation in rural development, sustainable development, and modalities for enhancing FAO/NGO co-operation 111/.

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(b) UNESCO has organized collective consultations with NGOs since the early 1960s, biennially on general matters and annually on substantive subjects. UNESCO also devoted almost all of a recent issue of its monthly journal to its work with NGOs. Although it primarily emphasizes UNESCO's strong links with the intellectual and academic communities, the "dossier" gives an informative and frank review. It covers UNESCO/NGO relations, examples of joint work with NGOs in standard-setting, field projects, conference preparation, and scientific programmes, and a very clear summary of UNESCO policies and procedures for "official" work with its 585 international NGOs 112/.

(c) UNCTAD has sponsored annual consultations with NGOs since 1988. The most recent, held in April 1993 and attended by 50 NGOs (15 from developing countries), dealt with UNCTAD's new work programmes and possible areas in which NGO/UNCTAD working relationships could be strengthened. Moreover, since 1992 UNCTAD has placed considerable emphasis on the contribution of non-governmental actors including NGOs in UNCTAD work, and has taken steps to further facilitate their participation in UNCTAD intergovernmental bodies.

(d) Development NGOs involved with the European Communities have met annually for almost two decades. The 1991 General Assembly included presentations by Commission and NGO officials, a debate with members of the European Parliament, and substantive workshops, including one concentrating on Southern NGOs and their external relations 113/.

(e) International NGOs with consultative status are represented at UNICEF Executive Board meetings and Programme Committee sessions and may circulate statements or, on occasion, make oral statements on relevant topics. They also form an NGO Committee on UNICEF, an important means of information and experience exchange which has a number of working groups on specific issues, and which organizes every year, with UNICEF support, consultations and conferences in various regions of the world on problems affecting children and their families. In addition, UNICEF works with other consultative groups on issues such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Primary Health Care, and child-related activities in Eastern and Central Europe. NGOs also work in collaboration with the 32 UNICEF national committees 114/.

(f) The World Bank and NGOs conduct an active policy dialogue which has recently focused on environment, poverty, and participatory development themes. An NGO-World Bank Committee meets annually, and has recently emphasized a stronger level of presentation and representation by the NGO Working Group and Bank managers. The Bank also has an increasing number of consultations with NGOs and NGO groups on operational projects and other matters, at least one of which has been characterized as a continuing process of "sustainable antagonism" based on effective but critical policy dialogue 115/.

(g) At the request of its Governing Council, IFAD established regular IFAD/NGO consultations which began in 1990. The November 1991 meeting of the IFAD/NGO Core Group concentrated on means of strengthening further collaboration, and an April 1992 meeting planned to discuss the establishment of operational guidelines for IFAD/NGO collaboration.

138. In a second area, regional and global special conferences on key development topics, which have been held since the early 1970s, some progress has also been made in involving NGOs, but it has often been ad hoc and erratic. There was increased NGO participation in the least developed countries and the education conferences in 1990.

139. The International Conference on Nutrition, organized by FAO and WHO and held in late 1992, gave special consideration to the role of NGOs in the preparation stages, at the Conference, and in follow-up. NGOs prepared papers and plans at country level and participated in regional meetings. In addition, for the first time in a global United Nations system meeting, NGO delegates were invited to participate in the Working Groups at the Preparatory Committee meeting in August 1992 rather than attend as observers. At the Conference itself 246 participants from 156 NGOs were present, including 65 NGOs from developing countries. The effective NGO contribution is largely reflected in the revised version of the World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition.

140. The largest and most publicized recent conference, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Brazil in 1992, involved undoubtedly the largest number of NGOs - Northern and Southern, environmental and developmental, and women's, youth, and indigenous peoples' groups - ever assembled. It is too early for detailed assessments of UNCED as a pivotal example of greater international organization/governments/NGO collaboration in developmental policy-making. This is especially true since the institutional arrangements for the Commission on Sustainable Development (to be established as a result of the Conference), including the role of NGOs, still remain to be worked out.

141. However, some very positive things did occur. The extensive media attention highlighted the increasing role of development NGOs in such conferences, and "people power" as a factor influencing global policy decisions. NGOs demonstrated their experience and expertise in their substantive contributions to the many complex issues included in UNCED, and their irreplacable advocacy and educational roles in building and enhancing public attention and support for the actions discussed. Throughout the multi-year preparation process of the UNCED, thousands of NGOs learned a great deal about how (and how not) to participate effectively in such policy-making processes with each other, governments, and international organizations. And it was encouraging that some countries included NGOs in their official delegations for the conference in Rio.

142. However, major problems also remain. The main one is that each of the recent global conferences has arranged NGO participation on an ad hoc basis. This means - at worst - that a return to old arrangements placing NGOs at the distant margins of the conference process could be reinstated at any time, and - at best - that NGOs are often confused, and lose much time (and perhaps enthusiasm) trying to find out what rules, and whose rules, are in force for any particular conference.

143. Although NGOs have been more involved at regional levels and in general preparations for recent conferences, their roles in the global sessions are still quite uncertain and separate. In addition, it is fundamentally difficult for thousands of NGOs to organize themselves and agree on common positions on contentious policy issues, although this is, of course, a characteristic that is inherent and unavoidable in democratic pluralism.

144. These participatory problems are, once again, experienced most severely by Southern development NGOs, although they closely represent the very people whom these conferences are most intended to help. The principle of popular participation so strongly emphasized by United Nations system governing bodies needs to be consistently applied: not just at the community level, or the national level, but in policy formulation and assessment on development issues at the regional and global levels as well.

145. The call for innovative approaches to collaborative development policy discussions is now being heard from many diverse sources.

(a) In a speech following UNCED, the Secretary-General of the United Nations stated that the United Nations must redefine its role in the context of democratic governance and development, highlight the unspoken concerns of the poor, and stimulate exchanges of ideas and proposals with sources outside the United Nations and the governmental sphere 116/.

(b) An experienced former diplomatic representative to the United Nations stated in 1992 that NGOs can play a very important role in international governance, since governments need input from an international network of groups outside official structures, who have tremendous energy and initiatives to contribute 117/.

(c) The President of the 1991 meeting of an NGO group noted the many recent resolutions from United Nations bodies calling for increased co-operation with NGOs, and expressed the hope that political changes in the world would bring more openness and more understanding attitudes toward NGOs and their contributions at the United Nations, including work toward a General Assembly resolution adopting standard rules for NGO participation in world conferences 118/.

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(d) NGOs have further cited the merits of an energized civil society of NGOs and people's organizations working alongside the state and the market to enhance national and international development, including essential dialogue on the policy environments and reforms which are critical to foster self-reliant development 119/.

146. In 1982 the JIU issued a report, as requested by the General Assembly, on organization and procedures for United Nations special conferences, and the Assembly subsequently adopted standard rules of procedure 120/. The ensuing decade has been marked by a very strong emergence of NGOs as major development partners, and by the establishment of the new system policies calling for decentralized, participative approaches to development. The United Nations continues to have important special global conferences, such as UNCED (the "Earth summit") and the World Summit for Social Development planned for 1995 to mark the United Nations 50th anniversary (already being labelled the "people's summit" by the media). To fulfill the new policy aims and buttress its credibility, the United Nations system needs to prove that "the people" will be much more fully and effectively involved in future global development conferences than in the past.

147. New arrangements for the participation of development NGOs in United Nations system regional and global conferences go beyond the scope of this report. However, the above summary shows that it is an important issue which many believe should be reassessed in the light of new policies called for by governing bodies, since the participative way in which new strategies and programmes are (or are not) elaborated will be critically important to their future success. This report cites the recent reports, of system-wide importance, on the role of cooperatives in the light of new economic and social trends 121/, and on the need to develop system-wide policies and strategies to assist in poverty eradication 122/. More effective participation of NGOs and other groups in regional and global development conferences seems to be a closely-related and equally important topic.

148. The Inspectors therefore recommend that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General, in consultation with the other organizations and agencies of the system, to prepare an in-depth analysis to reconsider and update the 1982 procedures on special conferences, particularly paragraph 6 in the Annex to resolution 37/14 B, to regularize and encourage greater participation of NGOs and other groups in special regional and global conferences on development issues. This change can enable the system's popular participation and self-reliance policy aims to be better realized by ensuring the inclusion of grassroots experience, perspectives and needs in future international development policy formulation.

D. Inter-agency

149. Inter-agency activities have not been very sharply focused on NGOs. In 1988, the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) (CCSQ) produced a report on an initial, informal review made jointly by system agencies and NGOs 123/. It identified some key issues involved in better collaboration, and offered some useful recommendations for United Nations system representatives at country level, for the organizations, and for the NGO community.

150. The Advisory Committee for the Co-ordination of Information Systems (ACCIS) compiled an initial guide to the databases on NGOs of 23 United Nations system organaizations in 1988 124/. Several other agencies have also had some involvement: they include the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP), composed of the major funding agencies for operational activities; the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Task Force on Rural Development and its Panel on People's Participation; and the ACC Sub-Committee on Nutrition. However, discussions of NGO issues in these bodies are more ad hoc, arising as part of the consideration of broader policy and operational issues.

151. The Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC) is an inter-agency committee linking FAO, ILO and the United Nations with four international NGOs. Its essential function is to promote coordinated assistance to cooperatives in developing countries. COPAC, which has a small secretariat in Rome, publishes regular bulletins and information notes, has a directory of over [illegible] organizations assisting cooperatives, and is developing a computerized data

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bank. It also organizes occasional symposia and consultations and promotes action-oriented research on the role of cooperatives in development 125/.

152. The only inter-agency body which is specifically focused on co-operation with NGOs is the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS). A number of agencies mentioned to the Inspectors that the NGLS has been most helpful to them, despite its small size and modest programme. The NGLS was established in 1975 to facilitate dialogue and collaboration between the United Nations system and the broad community of development NGOs. It also carries out development education and information work on North-South issues, and supports NGO work in areas of development education, public advocacy, and analysis of the policies and negotiation processes which influence relations between industrialized and developing countries.

153. NGLS currently receives about 50 per cent of its core funding from 12-13 United Nations system agencies and programmes, with the remaining 50 per cent coming from Scandinavian and other donor countries, plus additional funding for special projects. UNICEF is presently the lead agency, and UNCTAD is the administering agency. NGLS reports to its United Nations sponsors group and to the Annual Sessions of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC). The small secretariat is based in Geneva with an office in New York.

154. Over the years, NGLS has become a major link between development NGOs and the multilateral system. It works primarily with national Northern and, increasingly, Southern NGOs and with many international NGO networks (the NGLS database now contains some 4,000 NGOs). NGLS work falls under several main headings:

(a) meetings and international conferences on major aspects of North-South co-operation, as policy dialogues which have helped stimulate thematic networks and new forms of co-operation;

(b) national-level consultations between development NGOs and United Nations system organizations;

(c) organizing consultations between particular agencies (such as UNCTAD, UNDP, and UNFPA) and the development NGO community;

(d) facilitating NGO access to and participation in major United Nations system events and conferences;

(e) some major specialized tasks: for instance, during UNCED, NGLS administered a developing country NGO participation fund which supported the participation of 247 developing-country NGO representatives in the preparatory and conference phases;

(f) general information and liaison work between the United Nations system and the NGO community;

(g) an extensive publications programme.

155. The publications programme illustrates the wide range of NGLS involvement and its useful services. A directory designed to "open up" the United Nations system to NGOs by indicating materials, services and sources available is now in its seventh edition 126/. NGLS has produced overviews of system agencies working for development in sub-Saharan Africa 127/, and of NGOs involved in research, information, and advocacy work on debt and structural adjustment questions 128/. An NGLS series called "Voices from Africa" gives African NGOs and development practitioners a forum to express their views on development issues 129/. NGLS also publishes an English (Go-Between) and French (Le Messager) quarterly newsletter with a print run of 4,500 copies, briefing papers for NGOs on major United Nations system conferences, occasional papers on development policy issues, and other documents.

156. In July 1992 the JUNIC recognized the need to work more closely with the NGO community, the growing importance of inter-agency co-operation in this area in the post-UNCED era, and the excellent 16-year performance of NGLS in fostering United Nations system/NGO dialogue. To overcome the perennial institutional and financial instability of NGLS, it recommended to the ACC that NGLS become a jointly-financed United Nations system activity, based on voluntary and sustainable financial contributions. In October 1992 the ACC endorsed this recommendation and requested JUNIC to pursue its implementation.

157. The Inspectors join in recommending that the agencies consider regular and increased financial support to NGLS, in view of its long-established contacts and many significant activities with development NGOs worldwide. In addition, the concluding section of the 1992 report on United Nations system policies and activities to assist in the eradication of poverty stressed the need to strengthen existing mechanisms for inter-agency coordination and cooperation, to strengthen their mandates as necessary, and to ensure their coverage of the whole range of issues related to poverty 130/. In accord with this conclusion, the Inspectors also recommend that ACC continue to follow closely efforts to strengthen NGLS and its work, as an important component of the system's new operational priorities at the national and grassroots level.

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VI. OPERATIONAL PROCESSES

158. Understanding something about how NGOs work is a good starting point. Establishing structures and guidelines for co-operation, especially at the country and local levels, is an essential further step. However, for United Nations system agencies, governments, and NGOs to create truly effective and vigorous operational partnerships for their development programmes, they also need to concentrate on developing certain specific processes.

A. Networking

159. A "network" is a structure, but "networking" is a dynamic, ongoing process. Networking is an essential "life blood" function to help the many thousands of small development NGOs around the world to strengthen their roles and implement their programmes. Furthermore, in the modern era of telecommunications, personal computers, and the "global village", the possibilities for networking and information flows are tremendously enhanced.

160. The 1987 conference on NGOs in London defined networking as "the process of being willing to listen and learn from each other". Participants considered that networks should be participative, pragmatic, activist and goal-oriented, rather than bureaucratic institutions stressing membership, co-ordination and formalities. Not only North/South but also South/South co-operation and networking are a key to self-reliant development. Networks can be national, regional, or global, and can be organized around specific interests, but they should always be voluntary and representative - not imposed from above. Networks, the conference concluded, should also strive to promote innovation, learning, and the exchange of expertise and experience in order to strengthen the NGO community 131/.

161. Networking is also an important tool for United Nations system organizations to understand and utilize. Networking aids the agencies in locating operational NGO partners. The agencies can greatly advance NGO institutional capacities and heighten popular participation by supporting the creation and expansion of NGO networks. And interaction with NGO networks allows the agencies to spread information and enlist support worldwide for the economic, social and humanitarian objectives and programmes established by their governing bodies.

162. The networking experience of development NGOs and other organizations in both the North and the South is so varied and dynamic that it is impossible to do it any justice in a brief treatment. The following two pages therefore attempt only to indicate some key concepts, trends and considerations involved in networking activities.

163. A 1991 UNESCO paper surveyed 270 European-based development networks (or "consortia" or "umbrella organizations"). While a majority were active in developing countries, some had been slow to recognize the emergence of Southern NGOs and networks and the need to forge new information links and partnerships with them. Another paper surveyed 174 similar networks based in Africa. It found that although the networks were playing an active development role, further efforts were needed to encourage them to exchange experiences, and to develop new initiatives and co-ordinated strategies to strengthen the effectiveness and outreach of their members' actions 132/.

164. An area in which United Nations system organizations have long been active, and in which networking is quite extensive, is that of cooperatives. Cooperatives are not only significant economic institutions around the world, but are often the first institution outside the household that disadvantaged people can participate in. They thus have an important role in mobilizing human and financial resources in democratic and participatory ways. A 1988 ILO report provides an extensive analysis of the nature, role, types and potentials of cooperatives in Africa 133/. A 1992 United Nations report provides a very up-to date survey of the major international associations of cooperatives, the related activities of United Nations system organizations, the role of COPAC, and recommendations to enhance the contribution of cooperatives to development in the future. In its

resolution 47/90 of 16 December 1992 the General Assembly encouraged enhanced activity and joint efforts in this area, including increased participation by United Nations system agencies in COPAC 134/.

165. An influential NGO in networking activities is Innovations et réseaux pour le developpement (IRED, in English, Development Innovations and Networks). Founded in 1981 and oriented mainly towards South-South exchanges, IRED is a "facilitator", promoting associations and providing them with technical support. It has a small secretariat in Geneva, and some 170 members and 800 association and research institute partners in many countries. IRED organizes seminars for grassroots leaders around the world, and publishes some 4,000 copies of a quarterly bulletin, the IRED-Forum. It is considered a good example of ways that foreign aid funds can be effectively used to support the development of grassroots movements.

166. IRED not only supports the establishment of networks, but has published some significant books on NGO networking. It has, for instance, identified and analyzed centralized networks (in which a central body is most active), semi-decentralized networks (in which the central body facilitates and negotiates for its members), and "exploded networks" (which emphasize communication and co-operation between all members, with central body support). Many networks adopt this last structure because it provides flexibility, independence and shared responsibility 135/.

167. Assessments of networking from developing countries have observed that many local development NGOs have tended to isolate themselves. They have only recently and slowly begun to exchange experience and build contacts with each other, with Northern NGOs, and with development researchers. The analyses cite, in particular, problems with donor support which unfortunately twists networks towards donor rather than indigenous interests, and with efforts to develop "beautiful plans" for national NGO action which are never implemented. However, networks which are self-selecting and well-focused have had considerable success 136/.

168. Northern NGOs have similar problems. They have their own diverse objectives and operations, and are under pressure to concentrate their scarce resources on operational projects rather than "softer" communications activities. Northern NGOs may also be somewhat intimidated by the explosive growth of Southern NGOs (making it harder to separate the wheat from the chaff), while at the same time not recognizing that many Southern NGOs have made considerable progress in professionalizing their efforts. Northern NGOs need to break out of their immersion in their own programmes and their "projectitis", increase their knowledge of the activities and difficulties of other NGOs, and work more collaboratively, in consortia, to support Southern NGO partners rather than pursuing the time-consuming bilateral relations which many of them presently maintain 137/.

169. This uneven experience is not regarded as a critical barrier which blocks better networking by Southern and Northern NGOs. Instead, what is needed is encouragement and funding from donors to build networks based on specific needs and common interests, and encouragement to NGOs to overcome their mistrust of one another and realize that they have everything to gain by networking and building solidarity among themselves.

170. National co-ordinating councils or "umbrella organizations" differ from subject-oriented, functional NGO networks. They are more broad-based, more bureaucratic and formalized, and much less involved in operations at the grassroots level. They are presently getting much more attention as partner organizations in developing countries, since their main additional function (beyond information-sharing and consensus-building) is to liaise with governments or donors. Their role is difficult and their success quite mixed, however, since they must struggle to properly represent and co-ordinate a very wide spectrum of local NGOs that may be highly competitive with each other.

171. Multilateral and other agencies have on occasion actually hampered networking efforts: they have energetically promoted co-ordinating mechanisms without due respect for the NGOs' need and right to build a solid basis for co-operation at their own pace and on their own terms. In addition, when agencies want to assist umbrella organizations they need to recognize and support at least three other key "viability factors".

(a) **Membership** The organizations must meet their members' needs without seeming to compete with them. They must gain agreement with them on common priorities and programmes, pay attention to smaller members, and interact effectively with non-member NGOs in the same and other countries.

(b) **Financial resources** The organizations need to supplement their modest dues income with measures to raise funds locally and from international aid agencies. They must also consider whether they want to assume the role of administering and allocating grant funds from donors to their members.

(c) **Autonomy** Financial resource decisions can destabilize a co-ordinating body. The priority challenges are thus to find different ways to generate local income and to attract a proper mix of donor organizations, which allows the co-ordinating body to maintain both its actual independence and the appearance of independence 138/.

172. United Nations system agencies thus need to consider carefully how best to interact with local, national, regional, and sectoral NGO networks and with umbrella organizations. As in other areas, it would seem quite beneficial if the agencies would review and share their experience in working with networks.

173. FAO, which has long experience in this area, recently assessed for its governing bodies its experience with 24 of the 135 continuing technical co-operation networks it has supported in every aspect of agricultural and rural development. The extensive study included a statistical analysis of the networks, FAO's support, network activities and results, and the critical factors (planning, institutional, and external support) for promoting networks, and it underscored many of the points mentioned above.

174. The study concluded that the networks have proven to be effective vehicles for research co-ordination, training programmes, information exchange, and building self-reliance and independence. But good networks need time to develop and establish themselves, each in its own way. This requires that agencies carefully assess their own programme priorities and NGO needs, goals and capacities before helping to start a particular network, and make an indefinite but longer-term commitment to each network that is supported 139/.

B. Databases and information exchange

175. Participation is increasingly recognized as the key to development, but participation cannot occur without communication. Networking allows NGOs to join together to share information. But an NGO, or a United Nations system agency or other organization seeking partnership with NGOs, also needs to be aware of and open to many other important information sources and flows in the international development community.

176. The recent vigorous expansion of NGO activity, especially of Southern NGOs, is greatly facilitated - and probably partly caused - by the global "information explosion". Modern telecommunications are creating vast "information highways" which crisscross the world. The media - especially television - open up events in the farthest corners of the world for billions of people to see or hear about. Radio stations cover virtually the entire continent of Latin America. More than one billion television sets are now in use, a 50 per cent increase in the last five years with particularly rapid growth in Asia, where half the world's population lives. And more than 300 services now deliver satellite television, with scores of new communication satellites due to be launched during the next five years.

177. Most importantly, computer networks, facsimile machines, telephones, databases, and personal computers are making information-sharing a vastly more open, creative, and democratic process. This in turn is empowering people and voluntary groups in all societies by vastly increasing their

access to the information they need to voice their interests and build self-reliance. It allows them to create their own communication channels without control by institutions and hierarchies. Although most people in the developing world still lack the electronic linkages, they are becoming full participants in the "global village" at a faster and faster rate 140/.

178. United Nations system agencies seeking to strengthen their "people programmes" and work more closely with NGOs in development need to reach out to this vast, dynamic, and disorderly world of information. As with networks, this effort allows the agencies to learn about NGO experiences and activities and also to enlist their support in carrying out the agencies' own development or humanitarian programmes. However, it also allows each agency to better fulfil its role as a global information-gathering and disseminating centre, employing its worldwide programmes to gain knowledge about all types of relevant initiatives and programmes and make this knowledge available in a catalytic way to help support and encourage NGOs and general programmes in its sector.

179. A basic organizing step is to establish a database and/or directory of NGO partner organizations, as well as considering related information-sharing processes. Each agency, of course, must decide the extent of such efforts, in the light of its priorities and circumstances. At present, for instance:

(a) UNFPA has produced a guide to sources of international population assistance every three years since 1976, as required by the World Population Plan of 1974. It provides information not only on multilateral and bilateral agencies, but also on the purposes, substantive programme areas, and modes of assistance of more than 140 NGOs, university centres, research institutions, and training organizations 141/.

(b) A WHO directory gives information on the structures, policies, objectives and collaborative activities of 167 NGOs, as well as the main WHO programmes with which each works, and the related NGO and WHO contact people and addresses 142/.

(c) UNHCR's directory lists several hundred NGOs by alphabetical order, country in which they are based, country of implementation, and sector of operational activities 143/.

(d) In late 1991 FAO sent out a questionnaire to some 4,000 NGOs and NGO networks on their structures and activities. This process, updating an earlier directory prepared in 1985, will allow FAO to rationalize and expand its many existing contacts with NGOs, and to establish a reliable central database and directory on NGOs. In addition, the Development Education Exchange Service of FAO is an international network which issues bimonthly papers and annual indexes providing documentation on development education, the promotion of popular participation, and broader development issues 144/.

(e) Agency publications can encourage information exchange concerning particular regions. A 1991 UNESCO guide, for instance, provides information on the aims, objectives, and services of 270 European development networks, as well as analytical material 145/. During the 1992-1993 biennium, UNESCO also plans to establish a data bank for the collection and dissemination of documentation on NGOs.

(f) Agencies can also develop directories for specific sectors. In 1991 FAO produced an initial directory with information on 47 NGOs worldwide that are involved with fisheries and fishing communities, with the hope that the coverage can be expanded in later issues 146/.

180. Other multilateral institutions have also done some quite extensive work on general or sectoral databases, directories, and other important information documents.

(a) The World Bank has been developing information systems to serve as a two-way information flow with NGOs, catalyze information exchange, and promote policy development and dissemination of "best practice". Its NGO Resource Centre maintains comprehensive information about NGO activities worldwide for use by Bank staff and NGO and government representatives. A profile database contains information on over 5,000 NGOs. Other databases include over 600

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surveys and reports about NGOs retrievable by country and sector, a roster of over 300 specialized consultants, and over 2,500 technical documents on NGO work in low-cost appropriate technology and other sectors 147/.

(b) The Commission of the European Communities publishes an annual digest of different EC budget lines reserved exclusively for co-financing with Northern and Southern development NGOs (and amounting to some $US 85 million in 1992) as well as information on other resources partially or possibly available to NGOs 148/.

(c) The OECD published its first directory of development NGOs in its member countries in 1967, another in 1981, and a third edition in 1990. The newest edition contains details of more than 2,500 such NGOs. OECD also issued a more specialized directory in 1991, which covers only those development NGOs whose activities are linked to the environment 149/.

d) UNHCR and the OECD have co-operated in preparing a directory of NGOs dealing with refugees, migrations and human rights issues to be published in June 1993.

(e) The Asian Development Bank published an NGO database in 1989 which includes an overview of government policies, past government/NGO co-operation, and profiles of key NGOs in agricultural and rural development in seven of its member countries 150/.

181. At the country level, UNDP began an effort in 1989 with technical support, a questionnaire, and computer software to help its field offices work with governments and/or NGO associations to establish NGO databases, and perhaps publish directories as well. Many offices have taken such action and most of those that did not reported that databases/directories had already been or were being undertaken by other groups in their country. During field visits in Asia, the Inspectors were encouraged to find that national NGO guides or directories had recently been published in Bangladesh, Nepal, the Philippines, and Thailand by the governments, foundations, universities, or UNDP, (or with UNDP project support).

182. Beyond databases and directories, it appears that United Nations system agencies are still slowly feeling their way into the global processes of information interchange with the NGO community. Some interesting steps have been taken, however. For instance, the FAO Community Forestry Unit has gradually developed a full set of publication series (in up to four languages) over the past 15 years to reach and support NGOs, rural communities, governments, and other organizations in the community forestry audience:

(a) papers;
(b) notes;
(c) case studies;
(d) reference manuals;
(e) field manuals;
(f) issues and guidelines;
(g) a newsletter (with a circulation of 3,000);
(h) a network (with 1,300 members in 80 countries).
(i) filmstrips and videos; and
(j) cartoon booklets 151/.

183. In a far different way, UNICEF issued a single booklet in mid-1992 which is also a very effective information-sharing vehicle. The booklet notes that NGOs have been responsible for much of the progress achieved for children during the past few decades, and have a critical role in carrying out the Plan of Action set by the World Summit for Children in 1990. The booklet seeks to help international and national NGOs to better understand UNICEF and ways of working together, and states that all parts of UNICEF are ready to explore new areas of co-operation, facilitate communication, and ensure close consultation. Its 39 pages then discuss current UNICEF aims, how it collaborates with NGOs, working with NGOs at the national level through the "country approach", and UNICEF contact points worldwide 152/. In addition, UNICEF's NGO Liaison Sections in New

York and Geneva have recently developed a database on the more than 170 NGOs which have consultative status with UNICEF.

184. In its guide to European development networks discussed previously, UNESCO provides a quite useful framework of four discussion areas and three appendices covering its work in the field of information exchange and communication for development:

(a) the context of UNESCO development information work;
(b) its development information activities;
(c) new attitudes towards development;
(d) related challenges for UNESCO and European NGOs;
(e) a list of UNESCO headquarters services providing access to documentation on development;
(f) a list of UNESCO databases providing development-related information; and
(g) a selection of related UNESCO publications and documents 153/.

185. An example which is probably much more typical of most United Nations system agencies' exploratory efforts at operational information exchange with NGOs is provided by UNHCR. In April 1990 it held a workshop with a group of NGOs. This workshop has resulted in the creation of an electronic information network system, IRENE, which is now operational. In addition, the workshop produced a series of perceptive observations on information exchange efforts which seem relevant to most agencies.

(a) All organizations working with refugees need to develop an "information culture" as a central task, combining a strong message with effective use of existing and new technology.

(b) Dissemination of information is a priority task, but it must be credible and it must be shared among the participants and at a number of levels, especially when it concerns urgent actions to save lives.

(c) There is more information available than capacity to absorb it, but at times information may be withheld, in an unusable form, or hard to find: the key task is to match information with users and target audiences.

(d) Information may fall into various categories: public, advocacy, early warning and assistance, or public education and fund-raising.

(e) Not only do UNHCR and NGOs need a structure to share information, but NGOs need more effective structures to share information among themselves: such structures have common aspects and are needed at both field and headquarters levels.

(f) Contacts and meetings are needed to share information, formulate common strategies and initiatives to promote refugee issues, and consult regularly on information aspects of refugee work in order to establish policies, programmes and structures that will achieve maximum coverage.

(g) UNHCR and the International Refugee Documentation Network should seek to enhance access by outsiders to databases on refugee literature, refugee situations, and bulletin boards, both on-line computerized and otherwise.

(h) National NGOs and UNHCR branch offices should work together to establish joint training courses to implement information-gathering and distribution efforts using new technologies.

(i) The UNHCR NGO Liaison Unit and other UNHCR liaison functions should be strengthened to ensure better information flows and closer links with NGOs 154/.

186. Beyond efforts to work much more closely with NGOs in building information exchanges, United Nations system agencies can benefit greatly by learning about and supporting the many information exchanges which NGOs are already undertaking themselves.

187. There are, for instance, many NGO magazines and journals in circulation. Just those already noted in this report (Development in Practice, The Health Exchange, Impact, IRED-Forum, Lokniti, and NGO Management, 155/) contain not only a flow of useful articles but also information on a wide variety of reports, books, articles, directories and papers, as well as on relevant training courses, seminars, workshops, databases, conferences, and study tours. This makes them significant clearing houses for the exchange of experiences, ideas, knowledge and information to strengthen NGOs' (and other organizations') development and humanitarian operations around the world.

188. Some NGO groups have extensive publications and information sharing activities of their own. ACCION International has a series of studies, monographs, practical manuals and other papers and videos on micro-enterprise development and programmes in the informal sector. Private Agencies Collaborating Together (PACT)produces a catalogue three times a year containing some 150 titles: its training materials and multimedia information emphasize innovative approaches for building capacities of the poor and their institutions. PACT is currently trying to make the contents more widely available in developing countries and to promote South-South exchanges of materials. Similarly, ICVA gathers and disseminates information on voluntary agency activities, with emphasis on increased use of computer technology, as in its database on UNIENET (a United Nations computer network) on NGO activities in the field of natural disasters 156/.

189. NGOs have significant information processes in specific sectors as well. In the environmental field, for example, a computer network (EcoNet) links thousands of environmentalists and NGOs throughout the world. There are more specialized groups, such as the Pesticide Action Network, a coalition of 300 NGOs in 50 countries which works for sustainable pest control methods and is an important source of information on pesticides for grassroots NGOs. And national networks that share information and co-ordinate information are emerging, such as the Indonesian Environmental Forum (WALHI), an umbrella organization of more than 400 smaller environmental NGOs 157/.

190. This proliferation of databases and directories in United Nations system organizations, among NGO networks, and in other organizations raises the obvious potential for overlapping and duplication. For their own programmes, and to make information-sharing processes as efficient and effective as possible, the Inspectors believe that the agencies should attempt wherever possible to promote data-sharing among existing data bases.

191. This informational diversity is a vivid reminder of the dynamism of the global NGO sector. Its creativity and diversity are not just paper-pushing exercises, but can be central factors in carrying out agencies' grassroots programmes and enhancing their impact. This fact is increasingly underscored in the international media. In a late 1992 interview, a senior UNICEF official discussed the threats that disease, violence, malnutrition and inadequate schooling pose to children in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the deaths of almost a million children under five years of age every year in that region. After he had noted UNICEF's struggle to improve sanitation with only $US 1 per person per year, he was asked how he could possibly say that there is more hope now for progress. He responded that "A wealth of non-governmental organizations" has developed "outstanding" child-delivery, child-care, protection, education and other programmes 158/.

C. Capacity-building and training programmes

192. As already noted in various sections of this report, grassroots development NGOs are very promising but fragile organisms. For most of them, chances of failure may far outweigh chances of success. Their small, community-based nature means limited financial resources, limited organizational and technical expertise, limited project activities, limited funds, and limited access to networks that could assist them. For many of these NGOs, survival depends on the courage and persistence of a few people, struggling as best they can in very difficult or even hostile circumstances.

193. These small NGOs often have limited interest in increasing their actions, or in influencing or participating in government poverty alleviation schemes. They must cope with critical external constraints, such as a lack of transportation support or legal advice. They may not reach the poorest of the poor, and their "grassroots participation" efforts may in fact be dominated by their staff and by local elites. They may give little thought to planning the next step, or to lasting benefits of their work, often because donors give them only limited project grants. And those NGOs that do expand to take on more ambitious programmes may find themselves unable to extend past successes, to sustain their work after outside aid stops, or to develop the managerial and organizational skills they urgently need 159/.

194. Such NGOs clearly need help to achieve better management, more accountability, and the capacity to carry out more significant and effective projects and programmes. Recognizing that development is an enabling process, not a welfare programme, the 1988 OECD study on NGOs devoted most of its attention to ways in which promising local NGOs can best be identified, stimulated, and supported. One chapter reviewed the origins, functions, and evolutionary stages of local self-help organizations in developing countries, and their great promise - indeed essential role - in overcoming poverty.

195. Another chapter of the OECD report concentrated on selected issues and ways, primarily related to capacity-building, in which official aid agencies, donor NGOs, and researchers can aid this process. The capacity-building aspects identified include the following.

(a) Institution-building Building institutions is not a mechanical process. The key elements are achieving sustainability, developing self-reliance, and providing support through management consultancies, training, and manuals. Some significant research has already been done worldwide to identify essential indicators and elements of the institution-building process for local institutions.

(b) Development impact Much analysis has also been made of common traits, important capacities, management processes, and strategies that enable grassroots NGO programmes to increase their effectiveness to help bring meaningful change and a better life to their communities.

(c) Micro-policy reform Most people-oriented development activities are micro-policy reforms. They involve changes in attitudes and a better application of available services and resources to meet users' needs and demands. NGOs are the best catalysts for carrying out such reforms, but they need greatly increased capacities, coherent strategies, and new operating styles to perform this role effectively.

(d) Better aid for support institutions So-called "service NGOs" in developing countries have a critical role in supporting grassroots NGOs. However, they presently devote much of their time and energy to channelling money from donors to local NGOs to carry out individual projects. Instead, they themselves should be properly supported and encouraged to develop clear strategies and specific tools so that they too can promote and support stronger local organizations.

(e) Self-evaluation Self-evaluation is proving itself to be an important tool for building awareness, new programme approaches, and participative management into local NGO organizations. As a continuous activity, it is an integral part of institutional development for local NGOs (see section E. following).

(f) Appropriate technology Local NGOs frequently must resolve difficult questions of appropriate or inappropriate technology, or the adaptation of technology, to carry out successful projects and programmes. Specialized appropriate technology groups, both NGOs and governmental, exist worldwide and can assist local NGOs in applying appropriate technologies and appropriate training on a small or large scale 160/.

196. During the past few years NGO groups have taken the lead in following up on these and other capacity-building efforts. ICVA, for instance, launched a Management for Development programme in 1985, and broadened its focus into an Institutional Development programme in 1988. The programme assists national co-ordinating bodies and international NGOs to develop management

service programmes and promote increased NGO management effectiveness. It also provides a secretariat in Geneva for the NGO Management Network, a consortium of organizations and individuals interested in the management of NGOs, which began in 1986 and publishes the quarterly NGO Management 161/.

197. PACT provides extensive services and information resources to help voluntary organizations sharpen their management and programme development skills. Some two-thirds of the total PACT budget is directed towards increasing the capacity and self-sufficiency of voluntary organizations in the South, through institutional funding, the promotion of learning, training, technical assistance, advocacy and funds-leveraging efforts, which are carried out through local umbrella groups, consortia, training bodies, and the whole spectrum of voluntary groups. In southern Africa, to take one example, a PACT task-force is working as a broker of information services and support among Northern and Southern NGOs to promote the priority areas of institutional development, networking, communications and information systems, collaboration and exchanges, and advocacy in the North 162/.

198. Very relevant research also continues to appear. A June 1992 study by the International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC), for instance, gives an overview of NGO institutional development in sub-Saharan Africa, to help European NGOs decide how best to assist that process. The report assesses the evolution of African development NGOs and institutional development in practice, the needs of both service or intermediary NGOs as well as local community NGOs, and trends and policy issues. It also includes an extensive listing of recent literature on this topic. In addition, the report provides:

(a) a review of the "state of the art" of institutional development for NGOs;

(b) an analysis of demand and supply for institutional development services in Africa;

(c) an outline of strategic decisions needed from European NGOs wishing to support such development, and

(d) a simple checklist for institutional development decision-making 163/.

199. These three examples are only the "tip of the iceberg" of the information available in the worldwide development NGO community for training and capacity-building. As discussed in the preceding section, there is a vast web of periodicals, databases, and networks, and much of their information deals with training opportunities, or with ideas and experience on NGO institutional development. The challenge is to sort through and find that information which is most useful to a particular organization's programme needs.

200. At this early stage in the overall development of United Nations system operational work with development NGOs, the information available to the Inspectors on capacity-building, and on training opportunities and needs, was very fragmentary. Much work is still needed to establish effective programmes in this area with NGOs worldwide. Once again, United Nations system agencies, with their global information-sharing and research mandates, could play an important role in assessing, expanding, and sharing their experiences with each other and with the NGO sector.

201. The United Nations system, for its part, can benefit from a current initiative which, though it is still being developed and is presently broadly focused, could greatly facilitate capacity-building efforts and training with NGOs. During 1992 an inter-agency review of training in operational activities found that a great deal of such training already exists in many substantive areas. The review recognized that national execution of United Nations system projects and programmes is expected to increase rapidly and become central to the efficiency of operational activities in the future. Thus, training of national personnel - including those from NGOs and the private sector - will become increasingly important.

202. The review concluded that future attention should focus on (a) common programmes of training in programme development and management at the national level, (b) a comprehensive inventory of

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ongoing training to best use what is already available, and (c) a central training support mechanism to support these two programmes. CCSQ is also considering increased decentralization of capacities and authority to the field, common programming and strategies at country level, and national capacity-building issues. Although work with NGOs is not a major part of these deliberations as yet, they do provide a framework within which operational collaboration with and support of NGOs can be developed much more systematically in the future, along the lines discussed throughout this report.

203. Meanwhile, new capacity-building initiatives and training programmes for NGOs continue to emerge at various points throughout the United Nations system. An illustration of a significant approach is the World Bank's effort, already discussed, to develop inter-institutional strategic planning in order to increase NGO participation in programming and implementation of informal sector development.

204. During 1992 the Economic Development Institute and the EXTIE NGO Unit of the Bank planned three sub-regional seminars in Latin America for NGO groups interested in strategic planning. The seminars seek to enhance programming skills in the NGO sector. They focus on experience in institutional development, input into sectoral policies in countries, and participation in macro-policy dialogue on poverty alleviation and informal sector development. The further objective is to develop training materials and methodological guidelines for use by other training institutes, and a long-term programme and materials for use in other developing regions 164/.

205. The long-term involvement of some specialized agencies in NGO capacity-building activities is illustrated by FAO. As far back as 1975, its Freedom from Hunger Campaign gave priority to increasing popular participation, helping national institutions effectively use external development resources, ensuring appropriate technical support, arranging the interchange and publicizing of experience gained from community development projects, and promoting government-NGO dialogue 165/. FAO publications over the years dealing with training and analysis of experience in the Campaign, and in forestry, fisheries, popular participation and rural development programmes have already been cited.

206. The UNDP programmes for NGOs already referred to also illustrate the types of capacity-building assistance being provided. The Partners in Development programme aids NGOs and NGO associations with computerization, evaluation seminars, supportive research, operational manuals, and leadership training. The Africa 2000 network includes financial and technical assistance for country initiatives and spreading knowledge about successful practices, mainly through NGO networks. The regional project to strengthen NGO/government/UNDP collaboration in Africa assists NGO associations with needs assessments and staff training. UNV provides participative training workshops for group leaders at the village level. And diverse UNDP-funded projects support other capacity-building and training programmes and training institutions among indigenous NGOs and grassroots organizations 166/.

207. However, a much broader UNDP strategy and approach have now begun to emerge. In 1990 the UNDP Governing Council established policy guidance for the fifth UNDP programming cycle (1992-1996). The Council reaffirmed that national plans and priorities are the frame of reference for operational activities of the United Nations system, and stressed that UNDP should promote human development to attain self-reliance in developing countries through national capacity-building and strengthening. It decided that UNDP should focus on building and strengthening national capacity as a priority in six specific areas, and that the Administrator of UNDP should report continuously on the implementation of this effort, beginning in 1993. In a 1991 decision, the Council also called for an integrated conceptual framework to establish and strengthen national capacity, and for UNDP to work closely with system agencies to develop appropriate institutional development strategies 167/.

208. The first of the six areas which the Governing Council identified for priority treatment in capacity-building was "Poverty eradication and grassroots participation in development". The next two sections of this report discuss actions being taken by UNDP and other organizations concerning two central aspects of such capacity-building with NGOs, together with the Inspectors' ideas on some further actions needed.

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209. The examples discussed above indicate that much activity is underway in capacity-building and training to help strengthen local development NGOs. Nevertheless, there is great scope and a critical need for more resources, more programmes, and more ideas. All United Nations system organizations, for their part, need to carefully assess activities already underway in their sectors, and decide on some appropriate mix of their own collaborative programmes, support to established NGO initiatives, and/or adaptation of the programmes of others. They then need to organize and carry out a mix of supportive activities that best advances both their own programmes and the development objectives and institutional capacities of the grassroots NGOs with whom they work.

D. Funding, financial management, and auditing

210. Two final areas are important sub-topics of capacity-building work with NGOs. United Nations system and other agencies that assist local development NGOs with financial and human resource skills are accountable to their governing bodies and headquarters for proper, efficient, and effective use of the resources that they provide. They also need to assist NGOs to develop this accountability themselves. In fulfilling these requirements, the agencies must be carefully aware of (a) the small size of typical local NGOs; (b) the modest management capabilities which they have, and (c) the need to balance accountability requirements with procedures which recognize these basic NGO conditions as far as possible.

211. The 1988 OECD report observed that most Northern development NGOs raise the majority of their funds from voluntary donations, with various operational consequences. Fund-raising keeps them independent, but it also requires continuous efforts and hampers planning because of fluctuations and uncertainties. Particularly in recent years these NGOs have been under heavy pressure for careful accountability to the public for funds sent overseas, and for keeping their administrative costs very low. Government aid agencies have come to provide about one-third of Northern NGO funds in recent years and they often provide significant tax arrangements to encourage contributions, but these actions may also compromise the NGOs' autonomy. Further, those NGOs that do achieve relative funding stability risk becoming complacent and bureaucratic. They argue, however, that they can overcome this tendency by concentrating on decentralized grassroots development programmes overseas that help maintain their flexibility and capacity for innovation.

212. Southern development NGOs' financial problems are both different and similar. Experience cited in the OECD report indicates that local and service NGOs are quite able to organize themselves, increase their income, and pay for part of the services they receive from other indigenous institutions, as well as to attract financial support from their formal sectors, the government, and foreign aid agencies. Gradually, they enlarge their set of donors, both large and small, and this diversity is generally recognized both as an indicator of successful institution-building and of maintaining independence.

213. However, this multiple-donor situation calls for new oversight and reporting processes. For instance, financial reporting to each donor according to its own requirements would be a stifling burden. Instead, independent professional auditors can periodically review the NGO's income and expenditure from all sources. This eases NGO financial administration burdens while giving donors assurance of proper use of funds. Through such types of arrangements, flexible funding can be made compatible with accountability 168/.

214. **Flexibility** is a central operational and hence financial consideration as development programmes switch their emphasis to the grassroots level and to participation, self-reliance, and empowerment of the poor. As Southern NGOs become more and more essential to human development and poverty alleviation efforts, both the NGOs and the various funding agencies must recognize the new risks, opportunities and mutual accountability challenges which these operational realities present.

(a) Funding agencies must become more flexible about time schedules, working at the speed the local community adopts.

(b) Local autonomy is critical to adapt to changing circumstances and opportunities that arise: this does not mean irresponsibility, but decentralized control carefully built into project/programme selection, implementation, and evaluation "on-the-ground".

(c) At the local level skilled and sensitive implementors or community development leaders are critically important: their true value is found in their ability to facilitate and build community capacities, not in their ability to rapidly "do" development projects 169/.

215. Some major funding and oversight issues have already been identified. Both donors and Southern NGOs need to go beyond a "trust me" attitude to ensure careful, honest accounting procedures and more transparency of all NGO sector operations. Many Southern NGOs doubt that significant resources can be raised locally, and fear becoming beholding to local interests. However, many donors believe that it is both feasible and desirable for local NGOs to avoid long-term dependency on foreign funding by seeking more financing from their business, banking and government sectors. The greater attention and prominence being given to the NGO sector in development, as well as the desire of Southern NGOs to take on more direct responsibility, will require serious thought and new approaches from all concerned. The central issues are administrative oversight, the quantity and quality of reporting and disclosure, and sources and mixture of financing 170/.

216. Various basic funding options and considerations have been proposed to ensure that Southern NGO capacities can be promoted and sustained:

(a) donors need to make a serious commitment to the NGO sector, not just tokenism;

(b) this commitment should be long-term, and must recognize realistically the financing problems of work with the poor;

(c) funds are needed for institution-building and the employment of local staff;

(d) less aid should be tied;

(e) endowments should be established for those NGOs with proven performance records;

(f) donors should become a "market" for indigenous NGO services;

(g) NGOs can raise funds locally through such efforts as consultancies, training, and the sale of publications 171/.

217. The leadership role in this area has been taken by bilateral development agencies. They have long had co-financing systems for supporting their national development NGOs through matching grants, block grants (i.e. for multiple projects), umbrella organizations, multi-year programmes of various types, administrative cost allotments, as well as direct sub-contracting. More recently, several countries - notably Canada, the Scandinavian countries, France, Switzerland and the United States - have been providing direct aid to Southern NGOs, establishing special funding programmes or support institutions, maintaining funds at aid missions in countries for local NGO use, or using revolving funds or credit arrangements 172/. Increasingly, these efforts are producing new modes of financial collaboration, which conform more closely to the essential characteristics of NGO operations, but with longer time horizons and a programmatic rather than a project focus 173/.

218. NGO groups have also done considerable research and analysis of new approaches to external funding and appropriate management support for community organizations, Southern NGOs, and NGO associations at various stages of evolution. These approaches include new resource mobilization ideas, financing tools, financial management techniques, and income-generating efforts such as simple loan systems, donor purchase of food aid from local small farmers to avoid disrupting local markets, and loan guarantees to banks combined with technical and management advice to the local groups benefiting from the guarantees 174/. The NGO periodicals already cited contain much information on training and publications to improve Southern and Northern NGO management skills. A new

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example of such useful guidance is a multi-lingual IRED practical management manual: its Volume II details aspects of careful financial management to ensure NGO effectiveness. 175/. In addition, IRED and UNDP carried out a programme of regional seminars and national workshops in Africa from 1989-1992 to provide grassroots NGOs with information on savings and access to credit.

219. United Nations system organizations have generally lagged behind in developing specific funding and oversight arrangements in support of NGOs. The 1992 triennial policy review of the system's operational activities for development emphasized the strong demand for assistance in human resources development in order to strengthen countries' capacities to manage their own development. Various sections of the report urged new approaches to simplify and harmonize financial accountability and management audits at country level, increase decentralization and delegation to (and accountability at) the field level, pursue the "central purpose" of effectively using and strengthening national capacities, and recognize "high priority" for a common effort and strategy for training to enhance national management. Yet the entire report made no specific mention of the NGOs and informal sector that must be an essential part of national capacity-building efforts 176/.

220. The United Nations system, therefore, has far to go to catch up on the many initiatives taken by bilateral aid agencies and the NGO sector itself to develop specific financing support and initiatives for collaboration with Southern NGOs. However, some individual agency actions can be noted.

(a) FAO has long promoted efforts and new approaches to NGO funding and management issues through its Freedom from Hunger Campaign 177/. These new approaches include promoting local management by designing contracts which can be signed by grassroots organizations, and promoting flexibility and donor commitment by seeking funding on a programme rather than a project basis. FAO recently initiated a study on successful capital formation strategies in cooperatives, aimed at identifying new ways to strengthen such funding mechanisms within membership-based NGOs. An outline for the study was discussed at the March 1993 meeting of COPAC, during which all members expressed interest in it and several members pledged financial support for its implementation. Pilot testing began in January 1993 in seven villages in India with a report due in April. FAO is planning to conduct follow-up studies in other countries during 1993 in co-operation with COPAC and its member organizations.

(b) UNFPA prepared a report in 1987 on its experience, problems, and ideas for improvement relating to allowances and expenditures of its various implementing organizations at the country level 178/. Its 1992 guidelines on national execution noted that it is reviewing its criteria to assess the capabilities of prospective national executing agencies and ways that it could help to better develop national capacities for project execution 179/.

(c) The PAHO document on work with NGOs contains a section discussing financial and technical resource mobilization, together with annexes illustrating NGO proposals for collaboration 180/.

(d) UNV's collaboration with NGOs and community-based organizations has been strengthened by UNDP Governing Council Decision 92/35, which determined that the UNV Special Voluntary Fund should be utilized to support, inter alia, pilot and experimental projects at the grassroots level. These funds are being applied in such areas as artisan exchanges, electronic networking of community-based resource management and practice in the South, and the promotion and replication of innovative environmental initiatives at the community level through local eco-volunteers.

(e) ILO's collaboration with NGOs (in addition to workers' and employers' organizations) in technical co-operation projects is most often sub-contractual: the NGO carries out specific tasks in relation to the project's beneficiaries, based on its knowledge of local circumstances and demonstrated technical capacity, and in accordance with ILO's general financial rules and regulations.

(f) Other agencies with fairly extensive past work with NGOs, such as UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, the World Bank and IFAD, have varying processes and arrangements for funding and overseeing collaborative work with NGOs. The World Bank's 1990 progress report on co-operation with NGOs contained a useful analysis of experience and lessons learned in channelling financial resources to NGOs through Bank projects, financing NGO sub-projects, and engaging NGOs as contractors or executing agencies 181/.

221. In Chapter IV.A.3 on country-level guidelines, the Inspectors summarized UNDP's extensive work to upgrade its guidance and policies for government execution and national execution. In the area of financial management and oversight, a similar progression has been underway. Recently, UNDP has devoted much attention to streamlining implementation procedures and improving the financial accounting, reporting and auditing of government-executed projects. In particular, it established a Government Execution Audit Section at headquarters in mid-1989 to improve accountability and audit coverage 182/.

222. Reflecting this strengthened emphasis, UNDP issued quite detailed revised and new manual guidance for accounting, financial reporting and auditing of government execution in May 1991 183/. Specific manual procedures concerning NGOs, however, presently amount to only two paragraphs on subcontracting. In addition, the Governing Council decided in 1992 that national NGOs implementing UNDP-funded projects may be reimbursed from project budgets for their services 184/. UNDP officials said that the relatively limited project work with NGOs thus far has been handled under the government execution procedures, but that revision of relevant manual sections is now being considered. It should be noted that UNDP regularly audits only its own projects and those of UNFPA: the specialized agencies audit the UNDP-funded projects they execute, with UNDP providing spot checks.

223. The Inspectors wish to summarize some basic considerations bearing on this important issue. The UNDP Governing Council decided in 1990 that priority should be given to human development and capacity-building in six areas, one being poverty eradication and grassroots participation in development, and in 1991 and 1992 strongly urged further support to and guidelines for national execution efforts 185/. The 1992 report on system operational activities re-emphasized the human development focus on supporting the poor to achieve their own well-being, observed that the system's operational procedures are not yet adapted to national situations nor conducive to national participation, and concluded that it is essential to take a "fresh look" at these procedures 186/. The problem of unsatisfactory procedures is underscored by long-standing complaints from recipient governments and NGOs about United Nations system bureaucractic "red tape" and slow, centralized decision-making. To be effective, new mechanisms must be flexibly suited to the reality of NGO grassroots operations but also compatible with international agencies' requirements for accountability.

224. Several system agencies have recently begun work on overall strategies and actions to simplify and harmonize general country-level procedures for implementation and financial accountability, as a basic step 187/. However, as the activities discussed in this section indicate, the agencies have not yet taken a very specific or fresh and creative look at the whole area of financial collaboration with local development NGOs, nor have they carefully examined what bilateral agencies and the NGO sector itself are doing in this field. A number of knowledgeable officials in various system agencies told the Inspectors that joint efforts to develop appropriate, specific, and effective guidance for funding, financial management, and mutual accountability for future work with local NGOs are very much needed.

225. The Inspectors recommend that the ACC take the lead in working with system agencies, particularly the JCGP agencies, to develop appropriate and specific guidance for funding, financial management, and auditing processes with local development NGOs, harmonized and simplified as far as possible. Such guidance is an essential and practical action step to help these NGOs and community organizations to build their institutional and managerial capacities, while also establishing much more active and effective United Nations system work with them to achieve the common goals of poverty eradication and popular participation at the grassroots level.

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E. Evaluation

226. The first section of this Chapter stressed that networking is a pragmatic, participative learning process. This last section returns to the same theme. Evaluation is also a learning tool, intended to improve programmes and policies and - particularly in work with local NGOs - to become a more participative process.

227. The United Nations system is generally ahead of current practice in considering how best to work with NGOs on evaluation in the field, rather than catching up with others as in the area of financing. Because the system agencies have worked for more than three decades on smaller scale development projects and institution-building, they are more aware than other donors of the different evaluation approaches needed in human development activities at the country level. A decade ago, for instance, a JIU report on assisting governments to develop evaluation systems reviewed the agencies' initiatives, constraints, success factors, and experience in this then "new" area. It encouraged not only United Nations system agencies, but also host governments, bilateral and other multilateral agencies, and international NGOs to help expand governmental evaluation capacities 188/.

228. Some progress has since been made in strengthening government monitoring and evaluation systems, with UNDP playing a facilitating role. Unfortunately, government monitoring and evaluation systems are still generally considered to be a missing element in a comprehensive approach to the strengthening of national capacities to manage development, and a source of concern to both donor and recipient governments 189/.

229. A good example of specialized agency work on grassroots evaluation issues is a detailed "how to do it" manual on participative assessment, monitoring and evaluation in community forestry which FAO issued in 1990 190/. Officials in the FAO Forestry Department observed that the following characteristics must be central if United Nations system and other aid agencies are to realize the full potential of work with NGOs and other organizations in local communities, and to enhance local control over, and benefits from, local development projects:

(a) project formulation and execution must be flexible processes;

(b) rewards must be tied to a participatory process more than to fixed project targets, and

(c) locally selected activities must be planned, carried out, and assessed by local people as partners.

230. The 1992 operational activities report for the General Assembly, as already noted, cited the new human development approach, and the resulting need to harmonize and simplify operational procedures and encourage greater participation. The report observed that, with increasing decentralization of authority and responsibility to country offices and recipient governments, accountability for actual performance remains very important. It concluded that future monitoring and evaluation efforts should emphasize programmes more than projects; be based on new guidelines which stress capacity-building, impact and sustainability when assessing performance; and place more emphasis on building national capacities 191/.

231. UNDP prepared a first report on issues in participative evaluation in 1989 192/. Its 1992 progress report on evaluation stated that its overall role has been changing along with the overall UNDP programme towards development policy issues and strengthening national capacities for human development. Major evaluation efforts have, therefore, been directed at developing a more harmonized and simplified evaluation system which both agencies and governments can apply easily, increasing programme analysis and feedback of results, and strengthening national monitoring and evaluation systems. The report stated that recent evaluations confirm the need for UNDP to develop an integrated strategic approach, and ongoing analysis and dialogue, for strengthening national capacities including monitoring and evaluation.

232. In addition, the 1992 report discussed work underway to determine the extent to which participative evaluation by beneficiaries can be integrated into the existing evaluation system. Early

findings were that this process requires considerable extra time and flexibility. As part of its continuing work on participative evaluation and on guidelines for the monitoring and evaluation of capacity-building, UNDP plans to test and explore different participative approaches. The report also observed that a review of 40 evaluations of nationally executed projects showed a tendency to rely on government agencies alone, rather than on involving the private sector and NGOs 193/.

233. Other organizations and agencies have explored ways in which NGO evaluation capacities might be strengthened, while also conducting their own or joint evaluations of larger-scale NGO projects and programmes. The 1988 OECD report on NGOs summarized evaluation findings on experience and successful strategies of local NGOs in Asia, important considerations for aiding support NGOs, possibilities and problems of establishing self-evaluation in local NGOs, and evaluations of NGO development activities made by various donor countries during the mid-1980s 194/.

234. During 1991 and 1992 the Expert Group on Aid Evaluation of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD conducted further analyses and discussions on the organization, methods and results of evaluations of NGO activities. Some extensive new evaluations of grassroots NGO impact and lessons learned have also been prepared, such as those by the Overseas Development Institute 195/.

235. NGO groups themselves are working actively to expand evaluation activities and skills. PACT, for example, has a programme management development effort which includes workshops and other training in evaluation, primarily to help Northern PVO staff work with Southern PVOs, but now being extended to developing countries as well. PACT also sponsors a network (SEEP) which studies and articulates PVO experience in small enterprise evaluation, encourages workshops and joint training in evaluation, and has published guides for the monitoring and evaluation of small business programmes 196/.

236. These various actions indicate progress. However, the longer-term problem of how best to combine maximum accountability with minimally burdensome evaluation procedures continues. NGOs have long been cited for keeping their administrative costs low, but evaluation calls attention to questions of benefits achieved. For instance, four areas of NGO effectiveness have been highlighted for evaluative examination:

(a) NGOs' ability to mobilize non-government resources, both from private outside donors and through voluntary contributions of time, money and materials from beneficiary populations;

(b) the sustainability of NGO projects, i.e. the production of lasting benefits;

(c) the degree to which NGO programmes can be replicated, i.e. used and expanded by other NGOs, aid agencies, local governments or community groups;

(d) the extent of co-operation among NGO groups, including mutual learning, increased specialization through joint programming, or greater impact through pooling of resources 197/.

237. Deciding how to evaluate NGO activities is just as important as deciding what aspects to evaluate. One interesting framework considers various ways to encourage NGOs to give more priority to evaluation. It explores appropriate evaluation perspectives, including strategic management, community changes produced, and social system considerations. It also discusses appropriate methods such as participative reviews, planning systems, agreement on goals, and community responses. It then outlines the varying use of these factors by different types of NGOs and programmes, with a particular focus on the most difficult but most important group: formalized evaluation processes within NGOs operating at the grassroots level 198/. Another paper stresses pragmatic and equitable evaluation. It states that in the interests of informational equality, Southern NGOs should support evaluations made by Northern NGOs, but then should be able to launch their own subsequent evaluation missions to determine what use the Northern NGOs have actually made of all the information they collected 199/.

238. As with the other topics discussed in this concluding Chapter, evaluation is a key area for further action to develop and apply new operational approaches. Host and donor governments, Southern and Northern NGOs, and multilateral agencies can work together to integrate NGOs fully into the development and humanitarian work of the international community, and to much better achieve the human development and poverty eradication objectives which all these groups share.

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UNITED
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General Assembly
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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Forty-ninth session
Item 12 of the preliminary list*
REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Substantive session of 1994
Item 10 of the provisional agenda**
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Working with non-governmental organizations: operational activities for development of the United Nations system with non-governmental organizations and Governments at the grass-roots and national levels

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council the comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Working with non-governmental organizations: operational activities for development of the United Nations system with non-governmental organizations and Governments at the grass-roots and national levels" (A/49/122-E/1994/44).

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* A/49/50.

** E/1994/100.

ANNEX

Comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination

I. GENERAL COMMENTS

1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) found the report to be a significant contribution to understanding an increasingly important dimension of the work of the United Nations system in the broad field of development, especially at a time when relationships between multilateral organizations, Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were undergoing profound changes.

2. The members of ACC generally agreed with the view of the Inspectors that the present international situation and policies offered important opportunities for NGOs, Governments and development agencies to "form new partnerships" and to increase their cooperation. The report was, therefore, commended for providing a clear description of the situation and useful information on the subject of collaboration of the United Nations system with NGOs and Governments at the grass-roots and national levels in the area of operational activities for development, stressing both the constraints and opportunities for greater collaboration and emphasizing the need to strengthen national capacities and institutions, as well as the need to develop approaches for including NGOs in participatory programming processes. The report was also found useful as an input to the policy-level discussions, which were now taking place within the Economic and Social Council, on relations between the United Nations and NGOs.

3. A number of ACC members appreciated that the report refrained from dispensing prescriptions for collaboration with NGOs. They agreed instead that each member of the United Nations family should engage in sharing lessons of experience in collaboration with NGOs and use such findings as a basis for developing more effective approaches to cooperation that will benefit all concerned.

4. Some ACC members argued that, while it was important for organizations of the United Nations system to take the lead in catalysing Government/NGO collaboration, it must be emphasized that this was a long process that must be carefully nurtured, as trust and transparency were of paramount importance in building consensus. Experience has shown that the parties involved should move cautiously because of the diversity of NGOs at the national level and the fragility of grass-roots NGOs and the sometimes antagonistic stance between NGOs and Governments at the national level.

5. It was stated by some ACC members that it was important to note that NGOs were not the only organizations in civil society that should be drawn upon in the work of the United Nations system. Private for-profit organizations, as well as membership organizations such as labour unions, political parties, etc., could also be critical allies.

6. In the view of some ACC members, mention should have been made in the report of the fact that collaboration with NGOs at the country level was

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constrained by the requirement for United Nations organizations to work directly with Governments.

7. Several ACC members expressed the wish that there should be a companion report containing a financial analysis and comparison of costs involved in United Nations/Government/NGO activities. They believe, for example, that it would be useful to know about the financial and human resources that have been devoted to the Partners in Development Programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Forest, Trees and People Programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). It would also be desirable to have a comparative chart showing the resource flows to grass-roots and national NGOs from the United Nations system and those being provided by developed country NGOs and such institutions as the European Community.

8. Some ACC members asserted that the global component of their mandate was preponderant and that therefore few of their activities could be decentralized as recommended in the report. Consequently, those members have limited opportunities for working with NGOs.

9. Some ACC members expressed their disappointment that the report focused only on operational activities for development at the field level and therefore covered only the United Nations bodies with operational activities to illustrate cooperation with NGOs. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), for example, asserted that, during the past few years, it had steadily increased its collaboration with NGOs at both the programme design and implementation levels, involving them in the planning and execution of technical assistance projects and in research assignments, collaboration in meetings, seminars and workshops. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) noted that its activities as a co-sponsor of the inter-agency Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) and a member of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), and its catalytic function for third-party activities in the field of the environment, would have deserved a mention. In the view of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), it is at the grass-roots level that one must approach the drug issue, that is, above all through NGOs, which represent the most vital articulation of civil society. In that regard, UNDCP mentioned its assistance to the NGO anti-narcotics committees in New York and Vienna in the organization of a world forum, to be held in Thailand in 1994, on the role of NGOs in drug demand reduction.

10. Among other activities which had not been properly reflected in the report were those of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) related to convening a biennial conference of international NGOs on coordination matters with UNESCO, organizing biannual symposia, collective consultations of NGOs concerned with such areas as literacy, youth, higher education, family and human rights. Although collaboration with NGOs at the local level is central to the report, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) stated that its main non-governmental counterparts were the international NGOs, 97 of which had consultative status with UNIDO. In the view of UNIDO, its experience of collaboration with those NGOs deserved to be mentioned in the research of the Inspectors. The same relates to the activities of UNDP on improving policy dialogue between Governments and organizations of civil society through support

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for national efforts to improve legislative and administrative frameworks for NGOs; assisting in the establishment and improvement of government structures for relations with NGOs, and vice versa; involving NGOs in major policy initiatives; and supporting their policy research and advocacy on themes that relate to United Nations system initiatives, etc.

II. COMMENTS ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

> "Executive heads of each organization with operational activities for development, NGOs and Governments should consider the following basic steps (within the context of the situation, policies and programmes prevailing in each country) to build on and share experience and enhance multilateral agency/NGO/Government operational collaboration at the country and grass-roots levels:
>
> "(a) Participative programming process: integrative programming which seeks actively to involve relevant NGOs in the formulation, implementation and assessment of development programmes in an ongoing and flexible process;
>
> "(b) Delegation/decentralization: mechanisms to allow field representatives to work with NGOs and respond more flexibly and strongly to specific local needs, initiatives and opportunities in a country;
>
> "(c) Guidelines: a distillation of experience, policies, ideas, procedures and requirements which allows field representatives to understand better how NGOs work and to facilitate collaboration with them;
>
> "(d) Host Governments with NGOs: advice on approaches that field representatives can use to encourage and facilitate joint government/NGO efforts;
>
> "(e) Southern with northern NGOs: advice on the differences, similarities and changing relationships of these two groups, as the basis for encouraging their collaboration."

11. Some ACC members commented that a major effort would be required on the part of the United Nations system to make available information on the structures, goals and resources of the relevant NGOs and of the types of cooperation that have proven successful. Other ACC members asserted that the global component of their mandate was preponderant. Decentralization, therefore, does not seem to be appropriate for all agencies. It was also noted that, while very welcome, some of the provisions of this recommendation had already been put into practice. It should therefore be added that future activities, meant to implement the above recommendation, should build on ongoing or past experience.

Recommendation 2

> "Executive heads of each organization with operational activities for development, NGOs and Governments should consider actions at the following levels to build on and share experience and enhance multilateral agency/NGO/government operational collaboration:
>
> "(a) Regional: establishing a focal point for operational collaboration at the regional level, which would also support collaboration in those countries where field representation for NGO work is lacking or very thin;
>
> "(b) Global: establishing a central unit or focal point which provides overall policy, guidance and publications for operational activities with NGOs, with an emphasis on a mutual learning and dialogue process and close contact with the organizations' operational units that work with NGOs;
>
> "(c) Policy-making: seeking ways to benefit from NGO grass-roots experience and perspectives by establishing regular, substantive consultations with them on operational issues and programmes and involving them more actively in special regional and global conferences on development issues;
>
> "(d) Inter-agency: support for, interactions with and strengthening of the information and other activities of the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service, a small inter-agency unit which has very well-established working relationships with northern, southern, and international development NGOs."

12. A number of ACC members noted that they were already well under way with the implementation of this recommendation, in particular the establishment of global and regional focal points. Several ACC members have central units or focal points as advocated in subparagraph (b) and have organized consultations along the lines suggested in subparagraph (c). Other members asserted that owing to the nature of their mandate and their organizational structure, it would be impossible to implement this recommendation. One organization said that it would establish focal points for operational collaboration at the regional level, as well as a central focal point to provide overall policy guidance for operational activities with NGOs.

13. As regards subparagraph (d), the Organizational Committee of ACC endorsed, in October 1992, the recommendation of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) that the Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) should become a United Nations system jointly financed activity, based on voluntary and sustainable financial contributions.

Recommendation 3

> "Executive heads of each organization with operational activities for development, NGOs and Governments should consider action in the following areas to build on and share experience, strengthen NGO capabilities and

support operational collaboration between multilateral agencies, NGOs and Governments:

"(a) Networking: identify relevant NGO networks and umbrella organizations and encourage and support their ability to strengthen NGO knowledge and capacities;

"(b) Databases and information exchange: establish and maintain databases or directories of NGO partners, the sharing of database information where possible, and a two-way "information culture" to keep collaborating NGOs aware of the plans and programmes of organizations while gathering useful information and ideas from the huge range of NGO information sources world wide;

"(c) Capacity-building and training programmes: support capacity-building and training opportunities at the field level and the capacity-building, research, and training programmes already well under way in the NGO sector world wide;

"(d) Evaluation: seek ways to harmonize and simplify evaluation procedures while maintaining proper reporting and accountability, encourage participative evaluation approaches and strengthen NGO understanding of and capacities for evaluation."

14. Several ACC members noted that the implementation of at least part of this recommendation was already well under way. Other ACC members gave information about their cooperation with, and support for, NGO networks. In particular, the strategy of UNDP with respect to capacity-building of civil society organizations is very much focused on the areas identified in this recommendation.

Recommendation 4

"ACC should take the lead in developing appropriate, harmonized and simplified guidance for funding, financial management and auditing processes with local development NGOs in order to help build NGO institutional capacities and strengthen collaborative development work."

15. ACC supported the call for harmonized and simplified guidance for funding, financial management and auditing processes in so far as collaboration with local development NGOs was concerned. There was a view, however, that the building of local development NGO institutional capacities, in general, was more appropriately carried out at the national level than through ACC.

Recommendation 5

"The Administrator of UNDP should:

"(a) Ensure that a focal point person is active in every possible field office to gather and disseminate information on development NGOs in-country, encourage new initiatives with NGOs and apply UNDP programmes in support of NGO capacity-building;

/...

> "(b) Update and reissue the 1987 and 1988 UNDP general guidance on collaboration with NGOs, in the light of the many new developments and policies that have emerged."

16. In the context of its new strategy in this area, UNDP will fully implement this recommendation. In so doing, it will bear in mind the comments made by other ACC members, including in respect of the scope of the responsibilities of focal points and coordination mechanisms at the country level.

17. Many ACC members believe that, if a focal point is to be established in UNDP offices, that focal point should take into account concerns specific to the specialized agencies, e.g., the focal points should distinguish and give equal weight to rural and urban-oriented NGOs and employers' and workers' organizations. Some ACC members would prefer the option of establishing, under the authority of the United Nations resident coordinator, an inter-agency committee at the country level; the responsibility of the committee for liaising with NGOs should be shared, in accordance with their mandates and technical competence, among the United Nations system organizations and programmes represented in the country.

18. Some ACC members underscored the need for updating the UNDP guidelines on promoting effective NGO involvement in dialogue with Governments.

Recommendation 6

> "The Secretary-General should update and issue an extensive but uncompleted 1988 management review of NGO involvement in Secretariat operational programmes, and then formulate an overall policy and framework for the many United Nations programmes that work with NGOs."

Recommendation 7

> "The General Assembly might wish to request the Secretary-General, in consultation with other organizations of the system, to analyse and update existing procedures for special conferences in order to encourage greater participation of NGOs and other groups in special regional and global conferences on development issues and thereby help ensure popular participation in policy formulation on these issues."

19. ACC noted that this recommendation was addressed to the General Assembly of the United Nations.

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13 April 1994

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Forty-ninth session
Item 146 of the preliminary list*
MEASURES TO ELIMINATE INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-ninth year

Letter dated 13 April 1994 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Today, as Israel marks the Day of Remembrance for its fallen soldiers, a deplorable act of terrorism was perpetrated against Israeli civilians by Palestinian terrorists. Initial reports have revealed the following:

At around 10 a.m., as a passenger bus travelling from Afula to Tel Aviv was stopped at the central bus station in Hadera, a bomb exploded on the bus, killing 6 Israelis and wounding 25.

A short time after that explosion, another bomb exploded on the bus.

The terrorist organization Hamas claimed responsibility for this attack.

This comes one week after a similar attack on a civilian passenger bus in Afula killed 7 Israelis and wounded over 50.

The terrorists who commit these acts of violence seek not only the indiscriminate murder of Israelis, Jews and Arabs alike. They seek also to destroy the peace process itself by sowing violence, terror and hatred.

Israel calls upon all Member States to condemn this crime unequivocally, and to join in supporting the peace process currently under way between Israel and the other parties to the negotiations.

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* A/49/50.

Once again, Israel declares that it will not be swayed by such attacks of violence from its commitment to the peace process, nor will it allow such terrorist attacks to delay the peace talks.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 146 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gad YAACOBI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations

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General Assembly

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A/49/124
14 April 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-ninth session
Item 26 of the preliminary list*

COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN MILITARY FORCES FROM THE TERRITORIES OF THE BALTIC STATES

Letter dated 12 April 1994 from the Permanent Representatives of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to bring to your attention the text of a statement dated 7 April 1994 by the Presidents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on the decree by the President of the Russian Federation, signed on 5 April 1994.

We should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 26 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Ernst JAAKSON
Permanent Representative of
Estonia to the United Nations

(Signed) Aivars BAUMANIS
Permanent Representative of
Latvia to the United Nations

(Signed) Anicetas SIMUTIS
Permanent Representative of
Lithuania to the United Nations

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* A/49/50.

Annex

JOINT STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENTS OF ESTONIA, LATVIA AND LITHUANIA DATED 7 APRIL 1994

We welcome today's press reports that Russian government spokesmen have declared that Latvia was "mistakenly" included in President Yeltsin's decree of 5 April 1994, which listed countries where Moscow seeks to establish military bases. While we welcome these reported declarations, we are concerned about the consequences that such incidents can have for our countries, for our relationship with the Russian Federation, and for the ability of all countries to cooperate with the Government in Moscow. Thus, we invite President Yeltsin to declare personally and publicly that Decree No. 174 of 5 April 1994 was in error regarding the reference to Latvia and to reaffirm that he has assumed firm commitments on an early and complete withdrawal of Russian military forces from Estonia and Latvia.

The consequences of actions such as Decree No. 174 of 5 April 1994 and the same day's decision by Moscow to retreat from provisions previously agreed upon in negotiations with Estonia and Latvia go much further than merely affecting negotiations between our countries and Russia. Our residents are frightened but - even more - tensions are increased in Europe because questions are raised about the Russian Government's reliability as a negotiating partner. Fundamentally, these actions are not in the interests of anyone supporting stability and change towards democracy.

The Baltic States have always negotiated with the Russian Federation in good faith and will continue to do so. Our Governments will do whatever is necessary to mitigate the consequences of this unfortunate incident. However, our abilities to continue in the same vein are limited; thus we appeal to all interested parties for assistance.

Lennart MERI President Republic of Estonia	Guntis ULMANIS President Republic of Latvia	Algirdas BRAZAUSKAS President Republic of Lithuania

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